

EFFECTIVE PREACHING TO THE AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE AUDIENCE

A THESIS

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To Robyn, a beautiful woman who loves God and His Word

## CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
ABSTRACT.....	v
CHAPTER I IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM .....	1
CHAPTER II THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK .....	6
CHAPTER III LITERATURE REVIEW .....	59
CHAPTER IV PROJECT DESIGN.....	112
CHAPTER V OUTCOMES & CONCLUSIONS.....	138
APPENDIX A: SURVEY 1.....	170
APPENDIX B: SURVEY 2.....	173
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	176
VITA .....	183

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many years ago I was asked by my then Pastor, John Q. Gibbs to preach a sermon. I had never preached a sermon before in my life. I had observed and listened to a lot of sermons, but I had never preached a sermon. So I did the next best thing, I went to the local bookstore and ran my finger down the shelf of all the preaching books. One book grabbed my attention. It was Haddon Robinson's book on *Biblical Preaching*. I devoured the book and started the work of developing a very simple sermon. I cherished the book—because it gave me my foundation in preaching.

Then years later, I was humbled to have an opportunity to enroll in a Doctoral program (The Preacher and the Message) that was led by Dr. Haddon Robinson. I am deeply appreciative of the opportunity to sit at the feet of Haddon in this Doctoral program. It has been a rewarding and an enriching journey!

I am also thankful for the opportunity to have had Dr. Sid Buzzell my mentor on this project and my first reader. His constructive guidance was a tremendous help in completing this project. I also thank my cohort teammates: Mike Ruest, Marvin Smith, and Ed Jones. They have been very encouraging and a group of fine servants of the Lord.

I also want to thank my Antioch Baptist Church family for their prayers and support. They are a wonderful people and it is a great place to have the opportunity to practice the art of biblical preaching. The wonderful and beautiful women of Antioch were instrumental in helping me complete this project. It is a privilege to preach before them Sunday after Sunday. My goal in this whole endeavor has been to continue developing as a preacher in order use all God has given me to effectively preach His Word to men, women, boys, and girls that God may be glorified!

## Abstract

When God created humanity in His image He created them male and female (Genesis 2). Men and women bear the image of God. Today's preacher speaks to audiences that are largely female. The average church in America is approaching seventy-five percent female attendance. The preacher cannot afford to neglect any part of God's audience. The preacher should be sensitive to the female audience, not as an afterthought, but with forethought.

This thesis explores the need to effectively communicate to the female audience, while not neglecting the male audience. Women will feel that they are a vital part of God's program—which they are indeed. They will be empowered to serve and share in the fulfillment of God's program in the local church. This thesis encourages the preacher to gain feedback from the female audience to ascertain effectiveness in preaching to the female audience.

In particular, this thesis provides encouragement for effective preaching to African American women. Her history is similar but very different from the European female. This thesis looks at the basis for women's moral decisions; epistemological system germane to women; and women and power—all with sensitivity toward the African American women. In addition other factors influencing African American women are also reviewed. An understanding and sensitivity toward these issues will aid the preacher in more effectively connecting with women and African American women in particular.

# **EFFECTIVE PREACHING TO THE AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE**

## **AUDIENCE**

### **CHAPTER I**

#### **IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM**

##### **INTRODUCTION**

Churches can be categorized by two major adult groups: male and female. The website at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary Women's Ministry department notes that the average church in America is comprised of 73% women.<sup>1</sup> In other words there are three times as many women as men in the average church, yet the pulpits in those churches are predominantly held by men. This predicament is similar in the African-American church. The female population in the African-American church typically ranges from 66 to 80 percent.<sup>2</sup> The African-American pulpits are predominantly held by men.<sup>3</sup> Barna Research indicates that, "Overall, just 6% of all Protestant Senior Pastors are women."<sup>4</sup>

##### **THE IDENTIFIED PROBLEM**

The impetus of this thesis-project is that there are significantly more women than men in the average church in America while the majority of the church pulpits are

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<sup>1</sup> Effective Ministries to Women, Doctor of Ministry Program-Website, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (<http://www.gordonconwell.edu/dmin/tracks/women.php>), March 2006.

<sup>2</sup> C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1990), 304.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 289.

<sup>4</sup> George Barna, *Only Half Of Protestant Pastors Have A Biblical Worldview*, Barna Research Group, January 12, 2004, accessed on September 6, 2006, ([www.barna.com](http://www.barna.com)); Internet.

predominately occupied by men. The male preacher preaches out of his maleness and from his male dominated world view. This male perspective leads to an unintentional bias toward men and leads women to feel excluded from the sermon. The women may feel they are second-class persons because their womanhood is largely ignored in the male-dominated undercurrents of the sermons.

Alice Mathews in her book, “Preaching That Speaks to Women” reports that in general women make moral decisions differently than men.<sup>5</sup> Mathews also notes that in general differences exist in a woman’s view of power<sup>6</sup> and self esteem.<sup>7</sup> Women also generally communicate differently than men.<sup>8</sup> The difference between men and women is not a matter of superiority or inferiority. However, if the male preacher is not sensitive to differences between men and women, the preacher runs the risk of alienating the female listener.

In addition, male preachers may fail to incorporate positive female models in their illustrations and applications within sermons. Worse, male preachers may preach from a world view which diminishes the worth and value of women. The result is that a large percentage of women may leave feeling left out, ignored, and insignificant, not only by the preacher, but ultimately by God.

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<sup>5</sup> Alice Mathews, *Preaching That Speaks to Women*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 33-40.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 116-117.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 55.

The male preacher typically does not preach sermons that include female biblical characters. The male preacher misses the opportunity to embrace the women listener by excluding positive female biblical characters from their sermons. Preachers who are not sensitive to the female members of their audience run the risk of estrangement with the female audience.

The preacher may also be perceived to be insensitive to female needs and concerns because of sermons with male dominated illustrations, applications, and characters. The sermon may be more effective if it includes elements that nurture both the female and male audience. Thus, the preacher may enhance the effectiveness of ministry to females in the local church context.

### **PURPOSE OF THESIS-PROJECT**

This thesis-project addresses the issue of effective preaching to the African-American female in the African-American Church. In particular, it will address effective preaching to the African-American female at Antioch Baptist Church in Fairfax Station, Virginia. Antioch Baptist Church is a predominately African-American church located in Fairfax County, one of the largest suburbs of Washington, D.C. The African-American female population at Antioch Baptist Church is approximately 50% of the adult population. Even though the percentage of women at Antioch is lower than the 66 to 80% in typical African-American congregations, the importance of effective preaching to the African-American female remains critical.



## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Difficulties experienced by the African-American female from the male preachers' sermons will be identified by analyzing data collected through two preaching surveys. Conclusions drawn from the data analysis and synthesis will result in specific areas the preacher should address in sermon development and delivery.

## **EXPECTED OUTCOME**

This thesis-project is designed to produce four results:

- A raised awareness of the communication obstacles that are inherent in communicating to the African-American female by the male preacher,
- A series of recommendations and strategies for the male preacher to consider incorporating into sermons in order to preach sermons that effectively speak to the African-American female audience,
- A more helpful (or positive) sermonic experience for the African-American female,
- A basis for preparing instructional guides and journal articles that will sensitize preachers toward female audiences. The journal articles will help preachers to be more effective in preaching to the African-American female. The instructional guides can be used in break-out sessions at the annual Lifeway and North American Mission Board's Black Church Leadership week. The results will aid some three thousand preachers of predominantly African-American churches within the Southern Baptist Convention.

Preaching that specifically addresses the female listener should help the African-American female overcome feeling like a second-class person. The African-American female should feel included and valued. She should feel acceptance and significance by the preacher and by God. She should feel affirmed because of positive female images in sermon illustrations and topics. She should experience a more fulfilling sermonic and worship experience. She should feel that she matters in the body of Christ. She should feel appreciated in her femininity. The total church environment should be enhanced through effective preaching to the African-American female.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK**

This chapter will review the theological framework that supports effective preaching to women. There are numerous observations from the Old and New Testaments that provide for and support a biblical framework for effective preaching to women. The Scriptures reveal to us God's interaction with women whereby women receive divine, angelic, and/or apostolic instruction. In addition, there are examples of God's (direct and/or indirect) influence in the lives of women. The theological observations also reflect positive contributions by women in their lives and in their service to God. It is implicit throughout the Bible that women should receive effective instruction/preaching. There is overwhelming theological evidence that should compel the preacher to strive to be effective in preaching sermons which connect with the female members of the audience.

### **OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK**

In the Old Testament book of Genesis we read a summary account of creation which includes the origins of humanity created in God's image:

Genesis 1:26-28 (NIV) <sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." <sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. <sup>28</sup> God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

God creates both men and women in His image, male and female. God creates humanity with gender, male and female. Humanity created as male and female is the crescendo of God's creation.<sup>9</sup> The distinction of humanity as male and female implies a divine intent and purpose to be revealed for God's highest created order. Gordon J. Wenham writes that, "The expression "male and female" is most frequent in legal texts, and highlights rather the sexual distinctions within mankind and foreshadows the blessing of fertility to be announced in v. 28."<sup>10</sup> Terence E. Fretheim writes,

That both male and female are so created (see also 5:2) means that the female images the divine as much as the male; both are addressed in the command of v. 28. The reference to both implies that their roles in life are not identical, and that likeness to God pertains not only to what they have in common but also to what remains distinctive about them (the emergence of both male and female images for God could be grounded in this text). The fact that the words male and female are not used for animals indicates that both sexuality and procreation are involved.<sup>11</sup>

God's creation of humanity as both male and female is supporting evidence that God's purpose for both genders is to bear His image in and to the created world as they fulfill their God-given purposes. God gives the male and female authority to rule His perfect creation and all therein (v.28). God includes the female in creation along with her male

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<sup>9</sup> Aubrey Malphurs, *Biblical Manhood And Womanhood: Understanding Masculinity And Femininity From God's Perspective* (Grand Rapids, Kregel, 1996), 26.

<sup>10</sup> John D. W. Watts, *Word Biblical Commentary: Genesis 1-15*, vol. 1, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker, (Waco: Word Books, 1987), 33.

<sup>11</sup> Terence E. Fretheim, *The Book of Genesis Introduction, Commentary, and Reflection In The New Interpreter's Bible*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 345. (Genesis 5:2 (NIV) <sup>2</sup>He created them male and female and blessed them. And when they were created, he called them "man."<sup>11</sup> Verses 1-2 essentially repeat 1:26-28. The variations may only be stylistic, but the divine naming of male and female parallels the naming in 1:3-9, and gives male and female a decisive place within the created order (adam functions both generically and as a proper name).

counterpart with an exalted position charged to be fruitful, to multiply, and to rule over creation. Implied along with their exalted position is their obedience to the edicts of their creator God. The exalted position of the male and female over all creation places them in a position of great responsibility and accountability. The repercussions of neglecting their responsibility and accountability unfold in Genesis 3.

In Genesis 3, God holds both the male and female accountable for their actions in the garden. Sin enters the world in the great fall of humanity. God holds the woman, Eve, accountable for her actions. This implies that she is a significant character in God's order—neither the male nor the female escape God's admonishment. The repercussions resulting from the woman's disobedience are recorded in at least two Scriptures (Genesis 3:16 and I Timothy 2:12). Genesis 3:16 reads:

Genesis 3:16 (NIV) <sup>16</sup> To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in child bearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."

According to Wenham, "It should be noted that neither the man nor the woman are cursed: only the snake (v 14) and the soil (v 17) are cursed because of man. The sentences on the man and woman take the form of a disruption of their appointed roles."<sup>12</sup> As a result of their actions in the garden it will be troublesome for them to carry out their God-given assignments. In childbearing the woman will experience

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<sup>12</sup> Wenham, 81.

more pain. The NET Bible (New English Translation) notes that this pain in childbearing "... includes more than just physical pain. It is emotional distress as well as physical pain. The same word is used in v. 17 for the man's painful toil in the field."<sup>13</sup> In addition to the woman's increased pain in childbearing verse 16 also notes that she will "desire her husband but he will rule over her."

This segment of verse 16 is problematic for some due to the manner in which the Hebrew word translated "desire" is interpreted. Some see it as sexual desire for her husband while others interpret it as a desire to dominate or rule over her husband. Fretheim writes, "The "desire" of the woman for the man remains unclear. It could involve a desire for mastery (as with the verb in 4:7), which will be thwarted by the husband. More likely, it means that, despite the pains of childbirth, she will still long for sexual intimacy."<sup>14</sup> Regardless of the interpretation the critical argument to note is that God held the woman accountable for her actions which reinforces her position and responsibility as one of God's image-bearers, not to be excluded but to be included along with the man.

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<sup>13</sup> *The Net Bible*. Vol. First Beta Edition. First Beta Edition ed.: Biblical Studies Press, 1996.,33.

<sup>14</sup> Fretheim, *The Book of Genesis Introduction, Commentary, and Reflection In The New Interpreter's Bible*, 363. (A Dictionary of Biblical Languages: Hebrew, Swanson(תַּשׁוּקָה (*t'shuqah*): n.fem.; *desire*, urges, longing, i.e., a very strong emotion or feeling to have or do something (Ge 3:16; 4:7; SS 7:11[EB 10]+), note: this strong desire may refer to sexual urges or desires, or a desire to dominate, or just be independent of the man, other references may also be possible)

The responsibility and accountability of the woman to God is recorded in Scripture, noting the repercussions she suffered as a result of the garden incident, in both the Old Testament (Gen 3:16) and in the New Testament (1 Timothy 2:13-14). In 1 Timothy 2, the Apostle Paul recounts the woman's dilemma from the fall:

1 Timothy 2:13-14 (NKJV) 13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve. 14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.

Since the woman was held accountable for her actions this implies that the woman should have known God's instructions on how she and her husband were to live in the Garden avoiding the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. However, it appears evident that Eve was aware of the rule in the garden. Mounce writes, "Some who hold to this position argue that the issue in the Garden was also one of education: Eve had not been taught God's command, and her deception illustrates the danger of untrained people taking a leadership role. Yet when Eve entered into discussion with the serpent, she did know the rule even if she (or Adam?) enlarged it."<sup>15</sup> It is important to note as Thomas C. Oden writes concerning this passage, "There is no suggestion here that Eve was mentally inferior or morally more perverse or spiritually deficient."<sup>16</sup> Eve's accountability implies that God had determined that the woman are of great worth and of great value to Him, meaning that Eve is a person of significance in the Garden and in

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<sup>15</sup> William D. Mounce, *Word Biblical Commentary: Pastoral Epistles*. vol. 46, ed. Bruce M Metzger, David Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000), 134.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas C. Oden, *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching: First and Second Timothy and Titus*, ed. James Luther Mays, (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1989), 50.

God's creation. The woman is given a high and significant position in God's creation and with such standing there is responsibility and accountability to God—Eve knew or should have known God's prohibition.

In Luke 12:48b the Lord notes that from those who are given much, much will be required:

Luke 12:48 (NIV) <sup>48</sup> But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.

The woman, along with her male counterpart, was entrusted with great responsibility observed by her exalted place in creation, the responsibility to multiply, the authority to rule, and the responsibility to be obedient to God's Word. Along with great responsibility comes great accountability.

Women have been given much as indicated by their position in creation. It behooves the church and the preacher to ensure opportunities for women to be effectively taught God's Word so they may competently live according to God's Word. Effective preaching to the female audience is a critical part of the overall spiritual development of women's understanding and effective application of God's Word. The preacher should strive to eliminate barriers in order to effectively reach the heart of the female audience in order to encourage their spiritual growth. The



preacher should give every consideration for the female audience members and include them with forethought as recipients of the sermonic message. And with that understanding, they may appropriately apply God's Word to their own lives; because like Eve, they too are responsible and accountable before God. This should ignite a burning passion within preachers to ensure that their preaching is effective in reaching the hearts of their female audience members, in addition to their male audience members. The example of Eve is one who succumbs to the temptation of Satan because of a faulty understanding and application of God's Word. Effective biblical preaching may help listeners avoid future "Eve-like" moments in their lives.

The serpent deceives Eve in order to get her to violate God's Word. The serpent launches an assault on God's Word in an attempt to confuse and deceive Eve to the point where she violates God's Word. The serpent engages Eve in a conversation about the veracity of God's Word:

Genesis 3:1-6 (NIV) Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

<sup>2</sup> The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, <sup>3</sup> but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

<sup>4</sup> "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. <sup>5</sup> "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

<sup>6</sup> When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took

some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

In this discourse with Eve we get a glimpse of Satan's tactics. Satan causes confusion by raising a question to Eve that misstates what God has said. This occurs in verse 1 when Satan asks, "Did God really say, 'you must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" Satan's question is similar to what God has said but is intentionally misstated. What God did say about the tree in the garden is recorded in Genesis 2:16-17:

Genesis 2:16-17 (NIV) <sup>16</sup> And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; <sup>17</sup> but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

An observation from the text is that God commanded Adam and Eve not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. However, they were free to eat from any of the other trees in the garden. Satan's scheme was to twist God's Word. Unfortunately, Eve engages Satan in a conversation as she attempts to answer his question. Wenham writes, "The snake's opening question appears to be innocent curiosity. He never tells the woman to disobey God and eat from the tree. He cannot even be accused of lying: in the most literal sense all his words prove true, although at a more profound level they are totally misleading."<sup>17</sup> It appears that Eve is caught off guard by Satan's cunning—she may have been naïve and quite oblivious to the serpent's sinister intentions.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, *World Biblical Commentary: Genesis 1-15*, vol. 1, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker, (Waco: Word Books, 1987), 88.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 88.

In responding to Satan, Eve misstates what God did say by adding to God's prohibition, thus adding more restrictions than God had put in place. In Genesis 3:3, Eve responds to Satan by telling him that God's instructions were for them not to eat from the tree in the middle of the garden and that they must not even touch the tree or she will surely die. Eve misquotes God's Word by adding a restriction that God had not included in His instructions.

In verses 4 and 5 Satan directly contradicts God and assaults God's character. God has declared that when Adam and Eve eat of the fruit "they will surely die." However, Satan tells Eve "you will not surely die!" Satan continues his deceit by telling Eve that God has evil intent. Satan tells Eve that God does not want her to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil implying that God has lied and has ulterior reasons for them to abstain from that one particular tree: Because "...God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. Satan tells Eve that God does not want her to be like Him—to be like God!

This is an attack on the very character of God. Charles C. Ryrie writes, "The Bible asserts that God is true (Ro 3:4) and Jesus claimed to be the truth (Jn 14:6), thus making Himself equal with God. The ramifications of the truthfulness of God lie chiefly in the area of His promises. He cannot be false to any one of the promises He has made....The

truth of God also affects His revelation, for He who is true cannot and has not revealed anything false to us.”<sup>19</sup>

Verse 6 records the culmination of Satan’s assault on God and His Word as Eve and Adam eat the fruit which God had forbidden them to eat. Eve engaged in a destructive discourse with Satan and followed the suggestive seductions of the creature (Satan) instead of the commands of her Creator (God). In verse 6 Eve succumbed to the temptations that are common to this world as noted in 1 John 2:16-17.

1 John 2:16-17 (NIV) <sup>16</sup>For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. <sup>17</sup>The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

Satan attacked Eve’s lack of clarity and conviction about God’s Word as he presented himself through his words. Eve is enticed by the temptation that afflicts humanity, as described in 1 John 2:16-17: the lust of the flesh (the fruit was good for food); lust of the eyes (the fruit was visually appealing); and the pride of life (a promise to be like God). It is the person who has vague knowledge of Scripture who is vulnerable to this strategy whether they are male or female. In a setting where people are hearing but not understanding the personal relevance of Scripture—Satan has a greater opportunity to be successful as he tempts people to sin. Similarly today, good, effective biblical preaching

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<sup>19</sup> Charles C Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), 22.

will aid both women and men to overcome Satan's influence. The Bible encourages believers to be aware of the schemes of the devil and to resist the devil:

Ephesians 6:11-12 (NIV) <sup>11</sup> Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. <sup>12</sup> For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

1 Peter 5:8-9 (NIV) <sup>8</sup> Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. <sup>9</sup> Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

In order to avoid the schemes of the devil and to resist the devil it is vital that the believer understand the Word of God in order to stave off the attacks of the devil and his minions. Had Eve understood that Satan was her enemy she may have avoided the snare set before her. Through effective biblical preaching men and women may be equipped to grasp and apply the scriptural arsenal to fend off the schemes, attacks, deceptions and the snares of the devil.

For example, in Matthew 4, when Jesus is tempted by Satan, Jesus uses His knowledge of the Word of God to fend off the attack of the devil as He defends truth by the effective application of Scripture:

Matthew 4:1-11 (NIV) Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup> After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. <sup>3</sup> The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." <sup>4</sup> Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"<sup>5</sup>

Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. <sup>6</sup>“If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written: ‘He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’” <sup>7</sup> Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” <sup>8</sup> Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. <sup>9</sup>“All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.” <sup>10</sup> Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’” <sup>11</sup> Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Jesus’ temptation is similar to that of Eve’s temptation in the garden. Jesus is tempted with lust of the flesh (v. 3, stones to bread); He is tempted with pride of life (v.5-6, testing God by acting outside of His will—throwing Himself down); and He is tempted with lust of the eyes (v.8-9, raised up to see all the kingdoms that could be His). The only thing Jesus had to do was to bow down and worship the devil. Note that in verses 4, 7, and 10 Jesus responds to each attack of Satan by “It is written...” Jesus defends against the schemes of the devil by deploying His knowledge of God’s Word rightly applied to each and every attack. Carson writes of Jesus’ response to Satan’s temptation, “Jesus’ response is based solely on Scripture: “It is written” (v.4).” <sup>20</sup> In each case Jesus uses Scripture accurately to resist the devil—Jesus has learned to resist the devil (cf. James 4:7)<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew*. vol. 8, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 113.

<sup>21</sup> IBID, 114. (James 4:7(NIV) <sup>7</sup>Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.)

Perhaps had Eve been better equipped to handle the Word—then maybe she would have been successful in defending against the schemes of the devil. Hagner writes concerning Matthew 4, “It should be noted here that Jesus serves as a paradigm for the Church when he subjects himself, as the human being (ἄνθρωπος) living by the word of God.”<sup>22</sup> It behooves the church to make certain that the Word of God is taught and preached to provide the biblical knowledge to live by the Word. It should be evident that it is imperative that the preacher must deliver biblically sound sermons that expose the text to the listener which helps equip the listener to be on guard to defend against the schemes of the devil.

As a result of this sin in the garden Eve is not excluded from the resulting consequences. It is important to note in conjunction with Eve’s consequences, God addresses the woman directly about her involvement in this great sin. This indicates a personal relationship that God has and desires with Eve and with every woman.

Genesis 3:13 (NIV) <sup>13</sup> Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

God addresses her directly which implies that she is a significant being, a significant person with a personal relationship and accountability to God. She has standing with God and is accountable to God for her actions. Verse 16 not only notes the woman’s

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<sup>22</sup> Donald A. Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary: Matthew 1-13*, vol. 33a, (electronic ed.), ed. Glenn W. Barker and David A. Hubbard, (Dallas: Word Books, 1993).

repercussions as a result of her behavior, but also verse 16 notes God's direct communication with her:

Genesis 3:16 (NIV) <sup>16</sup>To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."

The first woman was to know God's Word and was held accountable for obedience to that Word. It is noteworthy that God speaks to the woman, Eve. He admonishes her, He deals justly with her sin as a loving Father would to His daughter. The theological reflection is that God desires to speak to women, as well as to men. God speaks to humanity in many ways. In his book *Experiencing God*, Henry Blackaby writes, "God speaks by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church to reveal Himself, His purposes, and His ways."<sup>23</sup> One can deduce that effective preaching to the female audience is one of the ways God speaks. Effective preaching helps the listeners feel that they are hearing from God which is critical to the spiritual growth and discernment of women, as well as men.

Effective preaching can aid women in developing their walk with God. We see throughout Scripture times when women call out to God from their difficult situations. For example, in Genesis 21 we read of Hagar calling out to God because she was abandoned by Abraham, the father of her son Ishmael:

<sup>23</sup> Henry T. Blackaby and Claude V. King, *Experiencing God*, (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 87.



Genesis 21:15-18 (NIV) <sup>15</sup> When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes. <sup>16</sup> Then she went off and sat down nearby, about a bowshot away, for she thought, “I cannot watch the boy die.” And as she sat there nearby, she began to sob. <sup>17</sup> God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, “What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. <sup>18</sup> Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation.”

God’s angel comes to Hagar’s aid in her desperate and difficult situation. The messenger from God comforts Hagar. Today’s messenger of God’s Word through effective preaching to the female may help her to know that she can call out to God from the most difficult situations.

In the book of Joshua, Rahab’s faith in God moves her to hide the Hebrew spies (Joshua 2). Her faith is also noted in Hebrews 11 (New Testament):

Hebrews 11:31 (NIV) <sup>31</sup> By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.

Rahab’s faith in God stems from hearing of God’s miracles on behalf of the Israelites during their exodus and subsequent journey from Egypt. The preacher who effectively preaches to the female audience has an opportunity to help them connect with God and possibly aid them in strengthening their faith. The preached word can help people connect to God as explained in Romans 10:14-15:

Romans 10:14-15 (NIV) <sup>14</sup> How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? <sup>15</sup> And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

D. A. Carson writes,

In vs 14–15a, Paul uses a series of questions to set forth the series of conditions that must be met if people are ‘to call on the name of the Lord’ (13): messengers must be sent, the message must be preached, people must hear the message and hearing must be met by faith. Paul then quotes Is. 52:7—*How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news*—to emphasize the importance of the sending of the preachers and also to move into an explicit focus on the gospel.<sup>24</sup>

Additionally, Harrison writes, “Paul proceeds to the second consideration in his closely reasoned argument, and it is this—that faith depends on knowledge. One must hear the gospel before he can be expected either to receive it or reject it.”<sup>25</sup> The Greek word ἀκούω (*akouō*) is translated “to hear” which carries with it the connotation of hearing with understanding and to respond with obedience.<sup>26</sup>

Women growing in faith must hear the Word with understanding in order to have an opportunity to be obedient to the Word. It is imperative that the preacher is serious about

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<sup>24</sup>D. A. Carson, *New Bible Commentary: 21st century edition*, (electronic ed.), ed. D. Guthrie and J.A. Motyer (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994)

<sup>25</sup> Everett F. Harrison, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Romans*, vol. 10, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 113.

<sup>26</sup> Swanson, *A Dictionary of Biblical Languages: Greek*, (electronic ed.).

the call to preach and be effective in preaching to women as well as to men. A strong faith in God can help women to make the right decision in difficult times, but first there needs to be the effective communication of God's Word through preaching in order to hear.

The more a woman trusts God's Word the more willing she may be to call on Him in her time of trouble. In 1 Samuel chapter 1, Hannah is in distress because of her barrenness. We read that she calls out to God in her time of distress:

1 Samuel 1:10-11 (NIV) <sup>10</sup> In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the Lord. <sup>11</sup> And she made a vow, saying, "O Lord Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head."

Hannah provides an example of a woman who seeks God through prayer to remedy her situation. Hannah in the depth of her pain (bitterness of soul) prays to God. Her emotional trauma is described as "bitterness of soul". This description of a woman's deep distress is used elsewhere in the Bible. "Elisha uses the expression, "her soul is bitter," in describing to his servant, Gehazi, the distress of the wealthy woman of Shunem at the death of her young son (II Kgs 4:27). The phrase used of Hannah conveys the idea of mental embitterment, deep disappointment."<sup>27</sup> It appears that Hannah's faith in the

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<sup>27</sup>C. F. Pfeiffer, *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: Old Testament*, (electronic ed.), (Chicago, Moody Press, 1962).

sovereignty of God does not leave her in her bitterness and deep disappointment. Her faith moves her to call out to God who is the only one that can remedy her situation. This suggests that Hannah has been schooled to trust God—and her faith in God does not waver.

Just as Hannah calls on God in her distress, an effective preacher to women should be sensitive to the needs and concerns of the female audience, encouraging her to call on God in difficult situations. The theological implication is that a sermon effective in connecting with women communicates God's love and kindness, which may help women feel free to call on God and to know God will hear their prayers.

The priest Eli rebukes Hannah for being drunk—at the time she is engaged in intense prayer:

1 Samuel 1:12-15 (NIV) <sup>12</sup> As she kept on praying to the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. <sup>13</sup> Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk <sup>14</sup> and said to her, “How long will you keep on getting drunk? Get rid of your wine.” <sup>15</sup> “Not so, my lord,” Hannah replied, “I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the LORD.

“The suspicion of the aged priest seems to indicate that the vice of intemperance was neither uncommon nor confined to one sex in those times of disorder.”<sup>28</sup> However, Eli’s assessment of Hannah was completely off-base as it appears he thought the worst of this woman. Eli missed the opportunity to minister and speak to Hannah’s need. Instead of encouraging her or helping her to maintain her hope—Hannah receives a swift rebuke from the man of God.

The preacher desiring an effective preaching ministry to women must be careful not to judge women too quickly or too harshly. Harsh judgment of women may have the negative impact of repelling women from the congregation. It may help the preacher to be perceived as sensitive to women’s issues to be considerate of women’s situations addressed in sermons. Otherwise an unintended message may be deposited with the women—becoming a barrier in effective communication to the female audience in general. Alice Mathews writes, “Preaching that connects with women is preaching that understands where they are (specifically) and where they need to be (specifically).”<sup>29</sup> As women feel understood by the preacher this should aid them to connect to the sermon message.

In 2 Kings, the author records the story of the prophet Elijah ministering to a widow:

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<sup>28</sup>R. Jamieson, "Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible." (electronic ed.) Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, (Oak Harbor: Logos Research System, 1997).

<sup>29</sup> Mathews, *Preaching That Speaks to Women*, 136.

2 Kings 4:1-6 (NIV) The wife of a man from the company of the prophets cried out to Elisha, “Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that he revered the Lord. But now his creditor is coming to take my two boys as his slaves.” <sup>2</sup> Elisha replied to her, “How can I help you? Tell me, what do you have in your house?” “Your servant has nothing there at all,” she said, “except a little oil.” <sup>3</sup> Elisha said, “Go around and ask all your neighbors for empty jars. Don’t ask for just a few. <sup>4</sup> Then go inside and shut the door behind you and your sons. Pour oil into all the jars, and as each is filled, put it to one side.” <sup>5</sup> She left him and afterward shut the door behind her and her sons. They brought the jars to her and she kept pouring. <sup>6</sup> When all the jars were full, she said to her son, “Bring me another one.” But he replied, “There is not a jar left.” Then the oil stopped flowing.

In this passage Elijah ministers to the woman in her hopeless situation. Elijah directs the widow to God’s provision to help her in her circumstance. Today’s preacher should desire to minister to women through effective preaching thereby giving them hope by connecting them with God. Effective preaching to women should help women cope with difficult times. Also, effective preaching about God’s compassion may help encourage women to trust God in difficult times.

In the Old Testament book of Esther we do not read of God’s presence directly. However, God’s presence is implicit throughout the story. God’s influence in Esther’s life moves Esther to do what is morally right even at a potentially high personal cost. God uses Mordecai, Esther’s cousin, to persuade her to come to the aid of the Jews, who are subject to annihilation at the hands of Haman:

Esther 4:15-16 (NIV) <sup>15</sup> Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: <sup>16</sup> “Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When

this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.”

Mordecai’s plea to Queen Esther moves her to risk her position and life to do the morally right thing. Esther decides to go to the king and press her case on behalf of the Jews. Mordecai communicates to Esther what he needs her to do and she responds in the affirmative and devises a plan of action. Just as Mordecai informs Esther what she needs to do, effective preaching to women informs women what they are to do as a result of listening to the sermon, a call to action. In Esther’s case, when she understood the “right” thing to do, she was equipped to make an enormous contribution to her people. An important way to unleash over half this Christian population—the female half—is to make Scripture clearly relevant to them. It also helps women to hear sermons about women of the Bible. Mathews writes, “...preaching from the lives of the people presented in the Scriptures can connect a biblical vision of God to women’s lives today. In particular, women are stimulated when they hear preaching based on the lives of great women in the Bible. They are able to enter into the struggles of Esther, who had to risk her life and defy a king to save her people (Esther 4).”<sup>30</sup> Esther is a picture of a woman completely surrendered to God. C. F. Keil writes, “The last words: “if I perish, I perish,” etc., are the expression not of despair, but of resignation or perfect submission to the providence of God...”<sup>31</sup> Esther would be a tremendously encouraging example of

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<sup>30</sup> Mathews, *Preaching That Speaks to Women*, 109.

<sup>31</sup> C.F. Keil, *Commentary on the Old Testament: Esther*, vol. 4, C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996), 221.

surrender to the will of God. Her story should be one that would be especially encouraging to women in sermon form.

Noted above are some of the theological inferences supporting effective communication to women from Old Testament observations. The effective communication in the Old Testament context relates to the modern-day preacher communicating God's Word to women. Women are a significant part of God's creation and throughout the Old Testament we see her relationship with God enhanced through effective communication and instruction. The theological evidence from the Old Testament supports effective preaching to women in the modern day context of preaching.

### **NEW TESTAMENT THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK**

In the New Testament there are many examples of God or His messengers (angels, apostles, the Holy Spirit, etc.) communicating to women which forms a theological framework supporting effective preaching to women. In addition, as a result of women receiving God's Word we see many evidences of women responding to God in worship, service, and support. Mary, the mother of Jesus receives angelic instruction concerning the child she is carrying:

Luke 1:26-28 (NIV) <sup>26</sup> In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup> The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."



Mary receives the angelic message that informs her of God's plan and calls her into service for the Lord. The angelic messenger Gabriel delivers a clear message from God. Mary hears the message and positively responds. Thus, allowing the Christ child to be deposited into her womb. However, it appears that Mary may have been the most unlikely person expected to be chosen by God. Luke Timothy Johnson writes:

...we notice, Mary holds no official position among the people, she is not described as 'righteous' in terms of observing the Torah, and her experience does not take place in a cultic setting. She is among the most powerless people in her society: she is young in a world that values age; female in a world ruled by men; poor in a stratified economy. Furthermore, she has neither husband nor child to validate her existence. That she should have "favor with God" and be "highly gifted" shows Luke's understanding of God's activity as surprising and often paradoxical, almost always reversing human expectations.

God showering a woman of lowly stature with His favor implies God's desire to enlist women as integral partners in His program. God being all powerful and sovereign could have chosen any method to save the world, yet He chose to initiate it through the human process of birth. Even though it may be diametrically opposed to human expectations, God will not do things diametrically opposed to His Word. Mary responds positively to God's Word in a dramatic way. It is suspected that Mary is in her early teens as most Jewish girls were betrothed to a man as they became teenagers.<sup>32</sup> Yet, in Mary's response she shows more than a cursory knowledge of God's Word. This example also

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<sup>32</sup> Walter L. Liefeld, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Luke*, vol. 8, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1984), 830.

provides credibility for effective preaching to the women. God's Word should be communicated effectively to women so they can hear and respond to God.

In Luke 1:46-55 we read Mary's response which shows a woman who is fully aware of the theological implications of carrying the Christ-child in her womb.

Luke 1:46-55 (NIV) <sup>46</sup> And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord <sup>47</sup> and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, <sup>48</sup> for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, <sup>49</sup> for the Mighty One has done great things for me— holy is his name. <sup>50</sup> His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. <sup>51</sup> He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. <sup>52</sup> He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. <sup>53</sup> He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. <sup>54</sup> He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful <sup>55</sup> to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers."

"Mary's poetic reply is known as the 'Magnificat' (the Latin verb for 'glorifies'). It uses the form and language of a Jewish psalm and is saturated with echoes of OT praise to God. Inspiration for the words came from 1 Sa. 2:1–10, the song of Hannah after God had given her a child."<sup>33</sup> Noland writes, "Mary has found joy in God's action of enabling her in a miraculous way to become pregnant with the child of messianic hopes. She recognizes here the intervention of God as Savior."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> D. A. Carson, *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994).

<sup>34</sup> John Noland, and., *Word Biblical Commentary: Luke 1-9:20*, vol. 35a, ed. Glenn W. Barker and David A. Hubbard (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 69.

Mary's response is an illustration of a young woman's knowledge and grasp of Scripture as well as understanding her role and contribution to this great event. Perhaps if Mary had not had a working knowledge of Scripture to discern the eternal significance and gravity of the moment, she might have opted to abort God's program. However, because of her grasp of Scripture and understanding the significance of the moment, Mary surrenders both body and spirit to God. She becomes a servant of the Lord completely engaged in fulfilling her role. The more women know the Scriptures, the greater the opportunity they have to fulfill God's program in their lives as they make choices that are inline with the Bible. Expository preaching exposes the congregation to the whole Bible, presents a high view of Scripture, with accurate interpretation, and provides application to the listeners—including women. Biblical preaching may help to inspire women to seek to know more Scripture and to be more obedient to God's Word. It is imperative for the Word to be preached effectively to women and men so both may fulfill God's purposes for their lives.

In Luke 8, Jesus proclaims the good news of the kingdom to audiences that include both males and females:

Luke 8:1-3 (NIV) After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him,<sup>2</sup> and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out;<sup>3</sup> Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

These women were helping to support Jesus and the Twelve. Liefeld notes that the word “them” (*autois*) refers to Jesus and the Twelve.<sup>35</sup> It is Jesus and the Twelve that receive the benefit of the women supporting the ministry.

Keener writes concerning the women being among the followers of Jesus:

Women sometimes served as patrons, or supporters, of religious teachers or associations in the ancient Mediterranean. (Men outnumbered them more than ten to one, however, because men had more of the economic resources.) But for these women to travel with the group would have been viewed as scandalous. Adult coeducation was unheard of, and that these women are learning Jesus’ teaching as closely as his male disciples would surely bother some outsiders as well. Upper-class families had more mobility, but commoners would still talk, as they did when other teachers (such as Greek philosophers) were accused of having women among their followers.<sup>36</sup>

These women were helping to support Jesus and the twelve men.

Luke 8:1-3 is a clear invitation for women to be welcomed as disciples of Jesus Christ. These women traveled with Jesus and were among those who heard Jesus preach and teach. Jesus’ ministry to women is evident as they receive the proclamation of the gospel in addition to healing from evil spirits and diseases. Though they may have been ignored by their society, they were not ignored by Jesus. Fred Craddock writes, “The most striking feature of this summary of a mission tour through Galilee is the presence of women who participate in Jesus’ ministry along with the Twelve.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Liefeld, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Luke*, 905.

<sup>36</sup> C. S. Keener, *The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament*. (electronic ed.), (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993).

<sup>37</sup> Fred B. Craddock, *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching: Luke*, ed. James Luther Mays (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1990), 107.

These women provided financial support for Jesus' earthly ministry. Some of these women were the recipients of Jesus' healing ministry. This should challenge the preacher to follow in the footsteps of Jesus ministering to women through effective preaching and teaching. This passage should motivate the preacher to create an environment that is encouraging to women making them feel truly welcomed and fully accepted as a participant in the ministry of Jesus Christ.

These women were visible participants as Jesus' disciples and supporters with the potential of suffering great personal risk. "Given the seductions and traps of money and power, it is not only commendable but remarkable that they found ways to put both money and power in submission to the gospel. No doubt there were social and political costs in their commitment. Even more remarkable is the fact that the risks associated with discipleship are compounded for them as women."<sup>38</sup> The Luke 8 passage demonstrates women's involvement and contributions to Jesus' ministry. The preacher today should be mindful of women's current and potential contributions (beyond financial) to the local church and ministry, especially in light of the statistical indication that the typical church in America is seventy-three percent female, compared to twenty-seven percent male.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>39</sup> Effective Ministries to Women, Doctor of Ministry Program-Website, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (<http://www.gordonconwell.edu/dmin/tracks/women.php>), March 2006.

This text also shows Jesus' sensitivity and concern for women through his preaching of the gospel to crowds that included women. The preacher should also be sensitive to women by being intentional in preparing sermons that minister to women's needs and issues. The preacher should strive to be effective in proclaiming the gospel to the female members of the audience. The model is Jesus' ministry which included care and concern for women.

Two other noteworthy incidents are recorded in Luke 8 that reflect upon Jesus' ministry to women. In Luke 8, Jesus heals Jairus' twelve year old daughter and Jesus heals the woman with an issue of blood for twelve years. Jesus does not rebuke the women for approaching him. Jesus commends her for her faith:

Luke 8:41-48 (NIV) <sup>41</sup> Then a man named Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with him to come to his house <sup>42</sup> because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying. As Jesus was on his way, the crowds almost crushed him. <sup>43</sup> And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her. <sup>44</sup> She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped. <sup>45</sup> "Who touched me?" Jesus asked. When they all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you." <sup>46</sup> But Jesus said, "Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me." <sup>47</sup> Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed. <sup>48</sup> Then he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace."

The text does not reveal the exact nature of the woman's bleeding, but many feel it may have been a gynecological problem.<sup>40</sup> The restrictions imposed by Leviticus 15:25-33 and by Jewish custom (codified in MZabim) would have radically affected the woman's life."<sup>41</sup> When the woman approaches Jesus, Jesus does not turn her away. He ministers to her needs specifically, and heals her of her malady.

Over all, Jesus' care and concern for the issues and conditions of women are in view. If we assume the woman's issue is truly a gynecological issue, it can be implied that preaching as well should minister to women's specific issues. For example the challenge of single parenting is a significant issue, whether it resulted from divorce, death, or children born out of wedlock. Along with single parenting, singleness, single again, and children born out of wedlock are some of the issues noted by Eddie Lane in his book, *The African American Christian Woman: The Village Gate Keeper*, facing the African-American female in particular and the church.<sup>42</sup> Mathews also cites that ministering to single women is a major concern in that, "Many leave the church or move from church to church, hoping to find a place where singleness is not seen as a disease. If we believe that a woman is not fully a woman until she is a wife, a single woman in the church will never be validated as a whole person."<sup>43</sup> This is an opportunity for the preacher to speak to and validate singleness to help singles feel cared for, ministered to, and fully accepted.

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<sup>40</sup> Liefeld, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Luke*, 916.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Eddie B. Lane, *The African American Christian Woman: The Village Gate Keeper*, (Dallas: Black Family Press, 2000), 206.

<sup>43</sup> Mathews, *Preaching That Speaks to Women*, 149.

Mathews writes, “Preachers need to reinforce this view so that single women can love themselves and others and so that those who are married can love those who are not.”<sup>44</sup>

As Jesus heals with miraculous power, the wise preacher should be sensitive to prepare messages that speak to the needs of women (Chapter 3 addresses major issues women face). Just as Jesus does not rebuke the woman for approaching him, today’s preacher should foster an atmosphere that is positive for the female audience. In addition, the preacher should present himself as approachable by the female audience, being approachable should enhance the receptivity of the message by the female audience. The preacher should develop messages that speak to the issues women wrestle with in their lives. As cited earlier, Mathews writes, “Preaching that connects with women is preaching that understands where they are (specifically) and where they need to be (specifically).”<sup>45</sup>

In Matthew 26, we see that Jesus defends the woman anointing him with expensive perfume:

Matthew 26:6-13 (NIV) <sup>6</sup> While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, <sup>7</sup> a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table.

<sup>8</sup> When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. “Why this waste?” they asked. <sup>9</sup> “This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor.”

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 136.



<sup>10</sup> Aware of this, Jesus said to them, “Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. <sup>11</sup> The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me. <sup>12</sup> When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. <sup>13</sup> I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.”

“The last verse (13) promises that the unnamed woman will be remembered wherever “this gospel,” that is the story about Jesus that culminates in the passion narrative, is proclaimed. Sad to say, her name, like the names of many other women mentioned in the Gospel (8:14; 9:18, 20; 15:22), was not remembered. Like the tomb of the unknown-soldier the nameless woman stands for many who responded to Jesus’ ministry with enthusiasm and who served him with love.”<sup>46</sup> Jesus defends the woman’s actions in two ways. One, he explains to his disciples that the woman has done a beautiful thing (a good work) and that she is preparing him for burial. Hare emphasized that the woman’s actions should not be overlooked or understated, “Jesus defends the woman by maintaining that she has done a “good work” (“a beautiful thing,” RSV and NIV, misses the point).<sup>47</sup> Two, he explains that this woman’s actions will be remembered wherever the gospel is preached.

This is an example of Jesus’ openness to everyone who would approach him, including women. He does not turn her away, nor does he rebuke her. Craig Blomberg

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<sup>46</sup> Douglas R. A. Hare, *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching: Matthew*, ed. James Luther Mays (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1993), 294.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 294.

writes, “In fact, Mary’s deed will be so praised that Jesus promises it will become a regular part of the story of his life. He thus assumes that the story will indeed be retold. Its inclusion in three of the four Gospels ensured that it was.”<sup>48</sup> Jesus also uses the woman’s good work as an object lesson to let his disciples know that his destiny was near.<sup>49</sup> The preacher attempting to reach women should help them to see God more clearly through sermons that apply relevant applications of how God works in their lives. The preacher should use illustrations in their sermons that include positive women’s situations, women’s stories, and other illustrations that speak to women. This may be very helpful for women to see themselves more clearly in sermons. This inclusion may help sermons connect more effectively with the female audience members. In addition, searching out illustrations that include women may aid the preacher to be more sensitive to women’s needs and thoughts.

In John 4, we learn that Jesus goes out of his way to minister in Samaria. In Samaria Jesus ministers to a woman at the well:

John 4:1-9 (NLT) Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard, “Jesus is baptizing and making more disciples than John”<sup>2</sup> (though Jesus himself didn’t baptize them—his disciples did).<sup>3</sup> So he left Judea to return to Galilee.<sup>4</sup> He had to go through Samaria on the way.<sup>5</sup> Eventually he came to the Samaritan village of Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.<sup>6</sup> Jacob’s well was there; and Jesus, tired from the long walk, sat wearily beside the well about noontime.<sup>7</sup> Soon a Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, “Please give me a drink.”<sup>8</sup> He was

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<sup>48</sup> Craig L. Blomberg, *The New American Commentary: Matthew*, vol. 22, ed. David S. Dockery, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 385.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

alone at the time because his disciples had gone into the village to buy some food.<sup>9</sup> The woman was surprised, for Jews refuse to have anything to do with Samaritans. She said to Jesus, “You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?”

Jesus ministered to the Samaritan woman by speaking to the issues of her life. Jesus’ disciples are perplexed that Jesus takes a detour and goes to Samaria on his way to Jerusalem. There is a more direct route to Jerusalem that by-passes Samaria. Further, the Samaritans and the Jews are estranged from one another. The Jews considered the Samaritans half-breeds. Most Jews avoided going to Samaria. Merrill C. Tenney writes, “The words “had to” translate an expression of necessity. While the term speaks of general necessity rather than of personal obligation, in this instance it must refer to some compulsion other than mere convenience. As the Savior of all men, Jesus had to confront the smoldering suspicion and enmity between Jew and Samaritan by ministering to his enemies.”<sup>50</sup>

Jesus ministered to the woman in Samaria. He crossed culture lines and was not restricted by political correctness or others’ prejudices. Jesus “had to” go to Samaria—Jesus was compelled to minister to them. As He begins his ministry in Samaria with a woman Carson writes, “John adds a note that the disciples were absent (8) to highlight the dialogue between the woman and Jesus. Jesus’ action overcame two Jewish prejudices—conversation with a Samaritan and conversation with a woman. The racial

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<sup>50</sup> Merrill C. Tenney, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: The Gospel of John*, vol. 9, ed. Frank E., Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan) 1981), 54.

prejudice is heightened by the woman's remark (9)"<sup>51</sup> Jesus' actions show that He and His message were available to all to include women. In addition Carson notes: "Jewish teaching disapproved of a woman having had more than three husbands, and the idea of a common-law husband had no religious support. The woman was therefore in great moral and spiritual need. We note the gentle way in which Jesus both commended her and yet criticized her (17–18)." <sup>52</sup> John 4:17-18 (NIV) <sup>17</sup> "I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. <sup>18</sup> The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."

Jesus addressed the woman's sin condition with "gentleness". Jesus did not preach fire and brimstone; He ministered to her with gentleness. Jesus illustrates effective ministry to women. He was intentional in going to Samaria. Today's preacher should be intentional about sharing the gospel with women. Jesus speaks to her in a way that she can hear and receive. He did not shame her or berate her instead he gently and truthfully ministered to her situation. The preacher today should strive to develop and use various sermon delivery styles.

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<sup>51</sup>D. A Carson, *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*. (electronic ed.), ed. D. Guthrie, J.A. Motyer. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994).

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

There are times when the preacher may be compelled to preach fire and brimstone, but the preacher should also look to times to preach with gentleness—especially to the female audience. The manner in which the preacher delivers the sermon is critical. Research says that seven percent of communication is with the word, however, ninety-three percent of communication is with voice and facial expressions, thirty-eight percent and fifty-five percent, respectively.<sup>53</sup> Thus, to be an effective communicator of God’s Word the preacher should strive to master the tone and body language employed during sermon delivery. Michael J. Quicke writes, “Sadly, nothing wrecks good content more than mumbled or confused delivery. A refusal to work on such things can utterly sabotage otherwise good preaching preparation.”<sup>54</sup> Sometimes it is not what you say that makes the difference in a person’s life—but how you say it that makes the difference! If Jesus can minister with gentleness at times, the preacher should also consider preaching with gentleness at times. The preacher should consider that only a few sermons may truly need to call down fire and brimstone.

The woman’s response from her encounter with Jesus moves her to go and tell everyone in the town about the man she had just met. Her witness was compelling because the Scripture records that the townspeople came out to see this man.

John 4:28-30 (NIV) <sup>28</sup> Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, <sup>29</sup> “Come, see a man who told me

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<sup>53</sup> Flora Davis, *How to Read Body Language*, in the Rhetoric of Non-Verbal Communication: Readings.

<sup>54</sup> Michael J. Quicke, 360 - *Degree Preaching*, (Grand Rapids: Backer Academic, 2003), 189.

everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?”<sup>30</sup> They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

As women have an encounter with Jesus through relevant preaching, they may be inspired to go and share with others—the good news of the Bible. Preaching that ministers to women’s issues of life with the power of Scripture may motivate women to be more effective witnesses by sharing their own testimonies of what God has done in their lives. The church should include opportunities for women to study and learn Scriptures, as well as provide opportunities for women to employ their gifting inside and outside the church. Women given the opportunities to share their faith stories may help draw others to Christ. The woman Jesus gently instructed became His best witness to the town as the text indicates that the town came to see him. Faussett writes concerning the question, “is not this the Christ?”—“The *form* of the question (in the *Greek*) is a distant, modest way of only half *insinuating* what it seemed hardly fitting for her to *affirm*; nor does she refer to what He said of Himself, but solely to His disclosure to her of the particulars of her own life.”<sup>55</sup> This woman is so moved by her encounter with Jesus, she is compelled to tell everyone in the town about the man she met at the well.

The preacher desiring to be effective in preaching to women can learn from Jesus’ model. The principle from Jesus’ model is to preach to women of all cultures and backgrounds. In addition, Jesus ministers to the issues of the Samaritan woman’s life,

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<sup>55</sup> R. Jamieson, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, (electronic ed.) Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, (Oak Harbor: Logos Research System, 1997).

likewise the effective preacher should preach sermons that are relevant to the needs, issues, and situations that present themselves in women's lives. The preacher should overcome cultural and political correctness and not be constricted by the prejudices of others.

Jesus' care and concern for women is also seen in His ministry from the cross. Jesus speaks to the care and concern of His mother, Mary, as the end of the crucifixion draws near:

John 19:26-27 (NIV) <sup>26</sup> When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," <sup>27</sup> and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

This observation points to the care and concern that Jesus displays toward women, likewise the effective preacher should adopt practices that exhibit care and concern for women through his preaching, life, and ministry. Tenney writes, "The anguish and terror of Jesus' mother at the Crucifixion must have been indescribable. His tender concern for her in the hour of his mortal agony illustrates his true humanity and compassion."<sup>56</sup> The preacher should be compassionate towards ministering to women and their issues as Jesus showed compassion in his ministry to women.

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<sup>56</sup> Tenney, 182.

Luke records in Acts that Jesus' disciples gather together in the days after the ascension. Women including Mary, the mother of Jesus, gather with the men. The men and women meet together frequently to pray:

Acts 1:13-14 (NIV)<sup>13</sup> When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James.<sup>14</sup> They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

This picture of the early church includes women in the assembly and participating in the prayer ministry. The inclusion of women in the assembly implies their participation in certain aspects of ministry (prayer, at a minimum), as well as, listening to what is being taught and preached. Polhill writes, “Verse 14 mentions others who were present in the upper room—“the women,” Mary, and Jesus’ brothers. The women may have included the wives of the apostles and certainly the women who accompanied Jesus from Galilee and witnessed his crucifixion (Luke 8:2; 23:55; 24:10).<sup>57</sup> The women were present at the meeting which indicates that they were not shunned or otherwise excluded. The preacher who desires to be effective preaching to women should consider including women in the activities of the church that help women feel an authentic part of the local assembly. The inclusion of relevant issues to women in sermons may also help women feel they are accepted by the preacher, the assembly, and God.

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<sup>57</sup> John B. Polhill, *The New American Commentary: Acts*, vol. 26, ed. David S., Dockery, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 89.



Acts 4:4 reveals the number of men in the early church grows to about 5,000, not including the women and children:

Acts 4:4 (NIV) <sup>4</sup> But many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand.

Keener writes that the number does not include women and children: “A total of 5,000 Jewish Christian “men” in Jerusalem, not including women and children (so the Greek here), is thus quite substantial. Because they were in the outer court, the converts surely included women as well.”<sup>58</sup>

This passage implies that women are a part of the early church. Luke notes the number of men at 5,000, he does not say there are no women present in the local church. Since it is reasonable to expect that women are present in the local church, this implies that there is a teaching and preaching ministry with instruction directed toward women and men. Therefore, today’s preacher should develop sermons that speak to women and men and their issues.

In Acts chapter 5, Sapphira is held accountable for lying to the Holy Spirit. She conspires with her husband in an attempt to deceive Peter and the church. Her husband,

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<sup>58</sup> Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, (electronic ed.), (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993).

Ananias lies to Peter about the proceeds from the sale of their land. Sapphira is just as accountable as her husband, and they both face the same penalty:

Acts 5:6-10 (NIV)<sup>6</sup> Then the young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.<sup>7</sup> About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.<sup>8</sup> Peter asked her, “Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?” “Yes,” she said, “that is the price.” Peter said to her, “How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also.”<sup>10</sup> At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband.

This text provides evidence that God holds women accountable for their actions.

Anthony Evans writes, “A wife should never disobey the Lord to follow her husband, because her greater allegiance is to God (see Acts 5:29).<sup>59</sup> This should move the preacher to strive to effectively preach to women, especially in the marital roles. The preacher should emphasize to men and women that both are accountable to God and that neither should lead the other to sin. The preacher should preach and teach biblical truth to both men and women so they may live in a manner pleasing to God. This passage provides evidence for the necessity of effective biblical preaching to women since God holds women accountable for their actions, as well as men.

Luke reports in Acts 16, one occasion where the Apostle Paul shared the gospel to women. As a result of that meeting, Lydia received Paul’s message:

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<sup>59</sup> Anthony T. Evans, *What a Way to Live*, (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997), 230.

Acts 16:13-15 (NIV)<sup>13</sup> On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there.<sup>14</sup> One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.<sup>15</sup> When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.

Apostle Paul preaches the gospel to the women in Philippi. Keener writes: "But Greek religion consisted of ritual, not teaching; thus these women would have had little training in the law and would welcome Paul's teaching—although his teaching a group of women might violate traditional Palestinian protocol."<sup>60</sup> The Christian movement does not neglect the preaching and teaching to women. The proclamation of the gospel should be done in such a way that women are included. The preacher should desire to preach sermons that effectively connect with the female portion of the audience. Paul's model supports the preacher preparing and delivering sermons that are effective in connecting with women. The gospel must be presented to women in an effective manner. The Apostolic ministry of Paul connects with women as recorded in Acts 17:12:

Acts 17:12 (NIV)<sup>12</sup> Many of the Jews believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men.

Keener writes:

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<sup>60</sup>C. S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, (electronic ed.), (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993).

Macedonian women had earlier gained a reputation for their influence, which they probably still exercised in this period. As patrons within church or synagogue upper-class women could also enjoy higher status than was available to them in society at large due to their gender. Social conditions thus made it easier for well-to-do women than for men to convert.<sup>61</sup>

We see that a number of prominent Greek women believe. This is more evidence that today's preacher should strive to be an effective communicator to the female audience.

In Acts chapter 18, a husband and wife team, Priscilla and Aquila instruct Apollos. Priscilla is part of the teaching team with her husband. They provide private instructions to Apollos:

Acts 18:24-26 (NIV) <sup>24</sup> Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. <sup>25</sup> He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. <sup>26</sup> He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.

Priscilla along with her husband, teach Apollos the gospel more fully. The implication is that Priscilla, along with her husband, is competent to instruct Apollos on his deficiencies in the Scriptures. Ralph P. Martin writes, "When Luke later puts Priscilla's name before Aquila's, it suggests that she had become a leader of the Corinthian Christians—consistent with Luke's emphasis upon the role of women in the

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

early community.”<sup>62</sup> It should not go unnoticed that Priscilla was competent to teach which implies that she had received instruction in the early church community and now was using her knowledge to tutor Apollos. The preacher should strive to effectively communicate God’s Word to the female so she is equipped to distinguish truth from error and may help others to know the truth.

Paul directs that it is through preaching that many will hear the gospel and that there are those who are sent to preach the gospel.

Romans 10:14-15 (NIV) <sup>14</sup>How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? <sup>15</sup>And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

The gospel is to be communicated to everyone, male and female. The English word “preach” is translated from the Greek word κηρύσσω (*kērússō*) meaning to proclaim, announce publicly. <sup>63</sup> Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible includes in their definition of preaching “God’s spokesmen “preach” and “proclaim” God’s deed to the people, challenging them to acknowledge the divine will for their lives.”<sup>64</sup> The preacher, male or female, has a critical role in communicating God’s Word to people to aid them in

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<sup>62</sup>William H. Willimon, *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching: Acts*, ed. James Luther Mays (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988), 145.

<sup>63</sup>S. Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (electronic ed.), (AMG Publishers: Chattanooga, TN, 1993)

<sup>64</sup>*Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David Noel Freedman, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 1079.

discerning God's divine will for their lives. The preacher must effectively communicate God's Word to men and women in both the non-Christian world and in the Christian world.<sup>65</sup> There may be obstacles (social, political, economic, etc.) that make those in the non-Christian world refuse to accept the salvation offered through Jesus Christ—but let it not be because of faulty preaching! Preachers are spiritual heart surgeons, because in one sense they perform heart surgery every time they give a proclamation from God's word. Preachers must ensure that they are not using rusty and dull scalpels on the spiritual lives of their listeners—male and female.

The New Testament provides a theological framework for effective biblical preaching to women. The preacher desiring to connect with the female segment of the audience should feel confident that the preaching to women is supported through Scripture. The preacher should strive to do it well!

There are benefits when teaching and preaching connects with women. Women are likely to respond with service. Already noted were Esther, Rahab, the mother of Jesus, the un-named woman who anointed Jesus' feet, and the women who accompanied and supported Jesus' ministry. Women's contributions are clearly seen throughout the Bible. Another example is Paul's letter to the church at Rome in Romans 16:

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

Romans 16:1-16 (NIV) I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea. <sup>2</sup>I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me. <sup>3</sup>Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. <sup>4</sup>They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. <sup>5</sup>Greet also the church that meets at their house. Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia. <sup>6</sup>Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you. <sup>7</sup>Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was. <sup>8</sup>Greet Ampliatus, whom I love in the Lord. <sup>9</sup>Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys. <sup>10</sup>Greet Apelles, tested and approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the household of Aristobulus. <sup>11</sup>Greet Herodion, my relative. Greet those in the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord. <sup>12</sup>Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord. Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord. <sup>13</sup>Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too. <sup>14</sup>Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brothers with them. <sup>15</sup>Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all the saints with them. <sup>16</sup>Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send greetings.

In Romans 16:1-16 Paul acknowledges the work and service of a number people in the local church, many of whom are clearly identified as women: (Dunn notes that, “Nor is it without significance that of the following list of 28 greeted in vv3-16 no less than nine are women (seven by name, three of them among the first five, and four of them noted for their hard work = leading roles);”<sup>66</sup>

- Phoebe (.1) – they were to greet her in a way worthy of the saints; she has been a great help to many people, including Paul.
- Priscilla (.3) – along with her husband, called a fellow worker in Christ Jesus; they risked their lives for Paul; and church met at their house.
- Mary (.6) – she worked very hard for them;

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<sup>66</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary: Romans 9-16*, vol. 38a, ed. Glenn W Barker and David A Hubbard (Dallas: Word Books 1988), 886.

- Tryphena and Tryphosa (.12) – they (those women) work hard for the Lord.
- Persis (.12) – she worked very hard in the Lord.
- Rufus’ mother (.13) – treated Paul like a son.
- Julia (.15) and Nereus’ sister (.15)

It is interesting to note that the exact role of Phoebe is difficult to discern. Some feel that she may have been a deacon because the word translated as “servant” comes from the Greek word “διάκονος”—which can be either masculine or feminine.<sup>67</sup> On the other hand the word διάκονος can also be used to reflect a regular pattern of service undertaken by Phoebe on behalf of her local church.<sup>68</sup> Harrison writes, “In any event, Paul is not stressing office but service, as we gather from verse 2.”<sup>69</sup> Phoebe has been given great responsibility because she is the one who thought to be designated by Paul to deliver his letter to Rome.<sup>70</sup> Phoebe may have been one of Paul’s prized pupils as she learned and studied from Paul. Her spiritual growth is evident in that she is noted as a servant and entrusted a great responsibility. Phoebe and the other women in this passage reflect the benefit of women active in the local church and ministry. It reinforces the critical need for preachers to communicate God’s Word effectively to connect with their listeners—to inspire them to service, male and female.

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<sup>67</sup> Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary: Romans 9-16*, 889.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 886.

<sup>69</sup> Everett F. Harrison, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Romans*, vol. 10, ed. Frank E., Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 161.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*



In Philippians 4 Paul cites two women who have “contended at his side” (.4):

Philippians 4:1-3 (NIV) Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends! <sup>2</sup> I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. <sup>3</sup> Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Paul commends these two women, though they had an unidentified conflict between them, for their service as those who have “contended” at his side.<sup>71</sup> Paul urges a “loyal yokefellow” to help these women resolve their conflict. The exact role of these women is not clear other than they were extremely important and critical to Paul’s ministry. The ambiguity about their roles centers around the word translated “contended.” It is translated from the Greek word “συναθλέω.” συναθλέω means (to fight together side by side with) and is a metaphorical word drawn from the games or the gladiatorial arena.<sup>72</sup> Some believe their work may have included preaching and teaching along side of Paul.<sup>73</sup> Hawthorne writes, “In any case, these two women appear to have been important persons with the church, among its most active workers, perhaps deaconesses; perhaps within each of their homes a separate congregation met for worship.”<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Word Biblical Commentary Philippians*, vol. 43, ed. Glenn W. Barker and David A. Hubbard (Waco: Word Books, 1983), 179.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 180.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 180.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 179.

## **OTHER THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK**

### UNITY

Some people might ask, “Do we need to be sensitive in preaching to females according Galatians 3:28? Aren’t we all one?” Galatians 3 reads:

Galatians 3:28(NIV) <sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

When Paul writes, “there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female...” he is referring to a spiritual view of Christians’ relationship with one another. In Christ, we should not look to those things that separate us in the natural realm. Believers should view one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. James Montgomery Boice writes, “Paul simply means that having become one with God as his sons, Christians now belong to each other in such a way that distinctions that formerly divided them lose significance.”<sup>75</sup>

The theological concept is that men are not to be more highly favored than women, nor are women to be more highly favored than men. The focus of Paul’s comment is unity. Boice further writes, “... for Paul declares that there is neither “male nor female.” It is hard to imagine how badly women were treated in antiquity, even in Judaism, and how difficult it is to find any statement about the equality of the sexes, however weak, in

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<sup>75</sup> James M. Boice, *Galatians: The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, Regency, 1976), 468.

any ancient texts except those of Christianity.”<sup>76</sup> “Indeed, in this statement we have one factor in the gradual elevation and honoring of women that has been known in Christian lands.”<sup>77</sup>

Evans writes,

In the Roman world ...women were little more than objects for men to use. They had very little social status, recognition, or significance. Then Christianity came along and taught that in Jesus Christ, men and women were of equal value, that there was no male or female in Him (Gal 3:28). In His own ministry, Jesus treated women with dignity and honor. He reached out to them and afforded them equal spiritual standing with men.<sup>78</sup>

We are still creatures with different genders, colors, and reproductive functions in the natural realm. For example, women can deliver babies from their wombs, and men cannot. Yet, in the body of Christ we are to see each other not by our distinctions, but by what unites us: Christ. Through Christ there is unity in the local community, not that there ceases to be male and female. Longenecker writes, “...that before God, whatever their differing situations, all people are accepted on the same basis of faith and together make up the one body of Christ.”<sup>79</sup>

Anders writes,

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 469.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid,

<sup>78</sup> Evans, *What A Way To Live!*, 376.

<sup>79</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, *Word Biblical Commentary: Galatians*, vol. 41, ed. Glenn W. Barker and David A. Hubbard, (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 157.

Having explained the vertical change that grace brought, now Paul shows its horizontal effect when he states you are all one in Christ. In Christ, human distinctions lose their significance. Regardless of race, profession, or gender, all who come to Christ must come the same way—through faith and repentance. As a result, with all distinctions erased, all believers are united in Christ. This does not mean that all distinctions are erased on the human level. A slave was still a slave in the eyes of Rome, but not in the eyes of God.<sup>80</sup>

Paul's plea here is not male or female superiority, but unity: in this body all are truly one in and with one another as the body of Christ.<sup>81</sup> In the local body of Christ, men and women are unified by their faith and belief in Jesus Christ (.26). The preacher has an awesome task of preaching to both men and women without prejudice towards either. At a minimum they are both equal before God—with priority and purpose to do God's will. Effective preaching is critical for creating and fostering an environment that fully receives and understands the oneness in the body of Christ.

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

There are theological inferences that preaching is to be directed to women, as well as to men. The preacher must be adept at crafting sermons that connect to the female members of the audience. Effective preaching cannot be done apart from the Holy Spirit. James A. Forbes, Jr. writes in his book, "Preaching and the Holy Spirit":

To preach today in Jesus' name, and to do so with power, still requires the enabling presence of the Holy Spirit. I do not know a conscientious preacher anywhere who would claim to preach without at least some acknowledgment

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<sup>80</sup> Max Anders, *Holmon New Testament Commentary: Galatians*, vol. 8. (Nashville: Broadman and Holmon), 1999.

<sup>81</sup> Boice, 469.

of the aid of the Spirit, even if the minister did not tend to speak of it in that way.<sup>82</sup>

Similarly, effective preaching cannot be done without the gifting of the Holy Spirit:

Ephesians 4:11-13 (NIV) <sup>11</sup>It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup>to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup>until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

The Holy Spirit gifts the preacher to preach. Jim Shaddix writes, "From beginning to end, preaching is the communication of the Holy Spirit"<sup>83</sup> "The Holy Spirit inspired the Word of God that we preach. He illuminates our understanding to its meaning and anoints our communication of it. He enlightens the minds of listeners to the message, convicts their hearts, and prompts them to respond. Preaching is the Holy Spirit's deal!"<sup>84</sup> This does not negate the preacher's responsibility to effectively prepare and deliver messages that connect with the female audience.

## PRAYER

In the book, *Anointed Expository Preaching*, Stephen Olford wrote on another important aspect of effective preaching. "Whatever other means we use for strengthening

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<sup>82</sup> James A. Forbes, Jr., *The Holy Spirit And Preaching*, (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1989), 21.

<sup>83</sup> Jim Shaddix, *The Passion Driven Sermon*, (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 39.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

or improving our preaching, prayer is fundamental”<sup>85</sup> Prayer is essential to effective preaching to both the male and female audience. Calvin Miller writes about preaching and the devotional life of the preacher, “The manual for this art is Scripture. The fuel for this art is the devotional life of those preachers who have never seen their primary credentials for preaching as coming from diplomas and degrees. Worthy preachers never serve any academy, only their calling.”<sup>86</sup> The prayer life should be an integral part of the devotional life of the preacher with his dependence upon the Holy Spirit to preach with accuracy from Scripture and with relevancy to the listener.

The preacher desiring to be more effective in preaching to the female members of the audience should include prayer as part of his preparation regimen. The Apostle Paul uses prayer and solicits the prayers of others in his preaching regimen.<sup>87</sup> As noted in Colossians:

Colossians 4:2-5 (NIV) <sup>2</sup> Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. <sup>3</sup> And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. <sup>4</sup> Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. <sup>5</sup> Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.

There is ample theological support for effective preaching to women. The biblical support includes the creation of gender by God; the ministry to women by angels, the

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<sup>85</sup> Stephen F. Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching*, (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 185.

<sup>86</sup> Miller, Calvin, *Preaching*, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006, 12.

<sup>87</sup> Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching*, 185.

Holy Spirit, Apostles, and Jesus. In addition, the preacher wanting to be effective in preaching to women should be guided and gifted by the Holy Spirit. Further, prayer must also be an essential part of the preachers' preparation for preaching in general, and in particular preaching to women. The preacher must also examine his/her view of women. The preacher must strive to honor women as Jesus showed during His earthly ministry—the honoring of women should be reflected in the preacher's sermons.

The theological framework noted throughout chapter two also applies to effective preaching to the African American female, which is the central focus of this thesis project. In the next chapter, we review literature that pertains to communicating to women including literature specific to African American women.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter reviews some of the literature relevant to the subject of effective preaching to women. The selected literature for this chapter includes subject matter for women in general and African American women in particular.

Alice Mathews in her book, *Preaching That Speaks to Women*, cites several areas that the preacher should be mindful of to effectively connect with the female audience. Mathews cautions that the differences between men and women are not absolute but are differences in general. The differences between men and women may not be evident in every case and should be viewed as differences in general. According to Mathews the differences between men and women include differences in: moral decision making, knowing, and their view of power.<sup>88</sup>

#### **WOMEN AND MORAL DECISION MAKING**

Moral decision-making is defined as “making decisions about what is right and wrong.”<sup>89</sup> Men and women make moral decisions differently.<sup>90</sup> Carol Gilligan writes in her book *In A Different Voice* that, “The essence of moral decision is the exercise of choice and the willingness to accept responsibility for that choice. To the extent that

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<sup>88</sup> Mathews, *Preaching That Speaks To Women*, 13.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.



women perceive themselves as having no choice, they correspondingly excuse themselves from the responsibility that decision entails.”<sup>91</sup> There are factors that influence the view of what is thought to be “right” and what is thought to be “wrong.”

Morality is also impacted by one’s personal view of gender: Anne Wilson Schaef in her book, *Women’s Reality*, writes that, “Similarly, because we all live in a white male culture, the question is not one of whether we are sexist, but of how we are sexist. (This is true for women as well as men, by the way).”<sup>92</sup> Schaef also writes that, “In the White Male System, morality is a public issue. In the Female System, morality is a private issue.”<sup>93</sup> The male system, “wants everyone to conform to its definitions of right and wrong. It wants everyone to support its myths and beliefs.”<sup>94</sup> Tiffany Barnhouse writes, “...women tend to focus on the values of community (though almost always on a small scale), while men tend to focus on the values of individualism.”<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 67.

<sup>92</sup> Anne Wilson Schaef, *Women's Reality: An Emerging Female System in a White Male Society*, (San Francisco: Harper, 1992), 10. (The White Male System—and it is important to keep in mind that I am referring to a system here and not pointing a finger at specific individuals within it—controls almost every aspect of our culture. It makes our laws, runs our economy, sets our salaries, and decides when and if we will go to war or remain at home. It decides what is knowledge and how it is to be taught. Like any other system, it has both positive and negative qualities. But because it is only a system, it can be clarified, examined, and changed, both from within and without. There are other systems in our culture. The Black System, the Chicano System, the Asian American System, the Native American System are completely enveloped in and frequently overshadowed by the White Male System. As, of course, is the Female System, which includes women from the other ethnic systems as well as white women. Page 8-9)

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ruth Tiffany Barnhouse, *Identity*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984), 34.

These authors concur that men and women approach moral decision from a different orientation. Men tend to make moral decisions from an individualistic (intrapersonal), rules approach and women tend to make more decisions from a communal (interpersonal), relational approach.

The moral development study conducted by Lawrence Kohlberg discovered evidence of differences in moral development between the genders.<sup>96</sup> Kohlberg developed a scale used to assess the moral decision making of men and women.<sup>97</sup> The Kohlberg scale theorized that there are six stages of moral development.<sup>98</sup> Kohlberg writes, “...respondent’s concern with norms of caring and affiliation tended to be scored in Stage 3, and a concern with norms of law tended to be scored in Stage 4.”<sup>99</sup> The results indicated that in general men make moral decisions based upon “the rules” (Stage 4) while women make decisions based upon “the relationship.” (Stage 3)<sup>100</sup> The rules are defined as “a law-and-order mentality that measures morality in impersonal terms.”<sup>101</sup>

Barnhouse notes that important research done at Harvard by psychologist Carol Gilligan has shed light on the moral development of men and women.<sup>102</sup> The advantage

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<sup>96</sup> Mathews, 33.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Lawrence Kohlberg, *The Psychology of Moral Development*. Vol. II. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 621-639.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid. 343.

<sup>100</sup> Mathews, 33.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Barnhouse, 34.

of Gilligan's work is that her study included women.<sup>103</sup> (The Kohlberg study only included boys—girls were measured against the resultant moral development scale).<sup>104</sup>

“The subjects of her experiment were presented with moral dilemmas and asked to choose an outcome, giving reasons for their choice.”<sup>105</sup> “Gilligan's research shows that women are more concerned with responsibility toward relationships, and men with the rights of individuals.”<sup>106</sup> In her book *In A Different Voice*, Carol Gilligan writes, “While women thus try to change the rule in order to preserve relationships, men, in abiding by these rules, depict relationships as easily replaced.”<sup>107</sup> The relationship is understood to include the responsibility within community and morality is viewed in interpersonal terms.<sup>108</sup> Schaef writes, “In the White Males System, decision making follows Roberts Rules of Order...In the Female System, decision making is a consensual process. It requires one to take personal responsibility for seeing that issues are clarified and that everyone has a chance to contribute.”<sup>109</sup> “In the consensual decision making, each individual involved is given the time to reach a personal place where she (or he) can at least go along with the decision and to some extent support it.”<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Gilligan, 2-3.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid. 18-19.

<sup>105</sup> Barnhouse, 34.(For example, should a man steal a drug he cannot afford in order to save his wife's life? The druggist has already been asked to lower the price but has refused. As early as age twelve, males and females see this problem differently. Boys see a conflict between life and property and try to solve the problem with logic. Girls see a disturbance in human relationships, which must be approached in personal terms.)

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Gilligan, 44.

<sup>108</sup> Mathews, 33.

<sup>109</sup> Schaef, 142-143.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 143.

For women, the relationship is more likely to be the overriding influence in making moral decisions. Having an appreciation for this relationship factor is helpful for better understanding of how women generally make moral decisions. The relationship is a significant part of a woman's world. Barnhouse, writes that, "Modern researchers, trying to study women as they are in themselves, in a way they have never studied before, find—often to their surprise—that, in any society, women define themselves in terms of their relationships with other people far more than men do."<sup>111</sup> Mathews writes, "Women tend to define themselves in terms of relationships, and they also evaluate themselves morally in terms of their ability to care."<sup>112</sup> Gilligan writes, "When a woman considers whether to continue or abort a pregnancy, she contemplates a decision that affects both self and others and engages directly the critical moral issue of hurting."<sup>113</sup>

The relationship will be one of the most important influencing factors in moral decision making for women. Women are also concerned about the impact of their decision on the community (relationships). This is in contrast to the way men make moral decisions which are generally based upon the rules. This difference in moral decision making between men and women can seem to be in conflict. These differences should be viewed simply just that men and women tend to make moral decisions differently. This should not be viewed as a negative or as a weakness in women.<sup>114</sup> It

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<sup>111</sup> Barnhouse, 33.

<sup>112</sup> Mathews, 38.

<sup>113</sup> Gilligan, 71. (hurting: reluctance to hurt self or others, emotionally, physically, etc. p.71-.81. "the wish not to hurt others and the hope that in morality lies a way of solving conflicts so that no one will be hurt. (p. 65))

<sup>114</sup> Mathews, 33.

just is the way it is. However, this difference should be taken into consideration when preaching to audiences that include women.

Mathews asserts that “In much preaching, the “masculine value” of rules and principles prevails over relationships.”<sup>115</sup> This may cause women to be somewhat conflicted because as Mathews states, the “...women’s sense of self is organized around their ability to make and maintain relationships, that affiliation cannot help but impact moral decision making. As a consequence, women (and Christian women in particular) may come to question whether they can legitimately include concern for others when making moral decisions.”<sup>116</sup> As Gilligan writes, “The moral imperative that emerges repeatedly in interviews with women is an injunction to care, a responsibility to discern and alleviate the “real and recognizable trouble” of this world. For men, the moral imperative appears rather as an injunction to respect the rights of others and thus to protect from interference the rights to life and self-fulfillment.”<sup>117</sup> “For women, the integration of rights and responsibilities takes place through an understanding of the psychological logic of relationships.”<sup>118</sup>

Irma Brownfield writes concerning Kohlberg and Gilligan’s work, “...envious comparisons were still drawn indicating that women functioned at a stage-three level interpersonal orientation: at this level few women were able to demonstrate any broader

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<sup>115</sup> Mathews, 38.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid..

<sup>117</sup> Gilligan, 100.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

base for their ethical stance other than that of their family or friends. However, Gilligan's work which examined women's responses when confronted with the excruciating choice of choosing to abort articulated a whole new ethical base, an ethic of care, underlying women's moral choices."<sup>119</sup>

For example, if the sermon text calls for a moral decision, the preacher may be wise to use illustrations and applications that appeal to relationships versus simply rules alone. The reasons for a particular moral decision should not simply be stated, but it should be explained in context of its impact on the relationship.<sup>120</sup> Research shows that in general, rules alone will not be the strongest influence in moral decision making for a woman. The research shows that rules without relationship are not a strong influence for a woman when making moral decisions. However, research indicates that rules with relationship will be a strong influence for a woman making moral decisions.

The preacher has an opportunity through preaching to connect with women and help them build a deeper relationship with God. Their relationship with God will be a more significant influence on moral decision making than the rules alone. Women will more likely follow the rules of God as an outgrowth of their relationship with God. Josh

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<sup>119</sup> Irma Brownfield, *The Moral Reasoning of Men and Women When Confronting Hypothetical and Real-Life Moral Dilemma*, In *Handbook of Moral Development: Models, Processes, Techniques, and Research*, ed. Gary L. Sapp, (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1986), 260.

<sup>120</sup> Mathews, 38.

McDowell's writes in his book *Right From Wrong*, regarding the importance of relationships, "rules without relationship leads to rebellion."<sup>121</sup>

The research suggests that for women rules without relationships equals disobedience while rules with relationship equal obedience. A deeper relationship with God may result in a deeper commitment to God. Preaching that helps women develop an ever growing and deepening relationship with God may motivate women to make moral decisions that are consistent with God's Word. Preaching that illustrates the impact of moral decisions on their relationship with God provides incentive to be obedient to God's Word. For example, women (and men) who are disobedient grieve the heart of God:

Ephesians 4:30 (NIV)<sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Genesis 6:6 (NIV)<sup>6</sup> The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.

1 Samuel 15:10-11 (NIV)<sup>10</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel:  
<sup>11</sup> "I am grieved that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions." Samuel was troubled, and he cried out to the LORD all that night.

According to the above Scripture it is possible for people to grieve the heart of God. The Christian woman may view the impact of her disobedience as damaging the relationship with God because it grieves the heart of God. (The Christian man may view

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<sup>121</sup> Josh McDowell and Bob Hostetler, *Right from Wrong*, (Dallas: Word, 1994), 125.

the impact of his disobedience as violating the rules of God and therefore grieving the heart of God). This is a negative impact on her relationship with God. A right moral decision does not grieve the heart of God—a right decision would protect the relationship (not speaking of loss of salvation, but a strained fellowship). She may be more likely to make a right moral decision to bless God (bless the relationship). A man may be more likely to make a right moral decision to be in compliance with God’s rules.

The preacher should consider preaching sermons that help women see how to be in relationship with God; what it looks like; the benefits of being in relationship with God; how she can bless God in the relationship; and what God desires for her. Michelle McKinney Hammond writes, “Perhaps we are all so busy trying to dot our spiritual i’s and cross our religious t’s that we’ve forgotten the first and most important reason we are in this thing called Christianity. For relationship. Yes, that’s it! We are supposed to be having a *relationship*, a love relationship with our Lord.”<sup>122</sup> The preacher has the opportunity to encourage and motivate women to deepen their relationship with God. Biblical preaching may help women make moral decisions consistent with God’s Word.

Because the woman makes moral decisions based upon relationships, it behooves the preacher to help the woman through preaching to elevate her relationship with God above

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<sup>122</sup> Michelle McKinney Hammond, *Get a Love Life--Your Own Intimate Relationship with God Leading Women to the Heart of God*, ed. Lysa TerKeurst, (Chicago: Moody Press, 2002), 23.



all others. When conflict requiring a moral decision arises, the woman will be more likely to follow the rules of her highest relationship, God. The preacher would be wise to preach sermons that stress the value of the woman's relationship with God. Mathews recommends to the preacher, "As you prepare to preach on a particular text, you must judge whether impersonal rules take precedence over interpersonal relationships or vice versa, or if there is a way to address the moral issues of a text that takes both sides into account."<sup>123</sup> The preacher should consider developing sermons that speak to both the impersonal and the interpersonal listener—therefore speaking to the entire congregation, male and female.<sup>124</sup>

Women make moral decisions in a number of areas in their lives, some major, some minor. Women make moral decisions in a number of areas to include: abortion, pre-marital sex, heterosexual or lesbian relationships, cohabitation, war, and drugs. Their relationship with God will be a key influencing factor in making moral decisions. The preacher's task and responsibility is to accurately preach the biblical text to women so they can accurately apply God's Word to their moral decisions. Concerning moral decisions, the preacher should preach sermons that address the supremacy of God's Word in our relationship with God. This should be the relationship which most influences women when making moral decisions.

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<sup>123</sup> Mathews, 40-41.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 41.

## **WOMEN AND EPISTEMOLOGY (WAYS OF KNOWING)**

In the area of epistemology or “knowing”: the study of “how we know what we know”<sup>125</sup> Blenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule in their book *Womens’ Ways of Knowing*, list five types of “knowers” or epistemological categories:

- 1) Silent Knowers, 2) Received Knowers, 3) Subjective Knowers, 4) Procedural Knowers, and 5) Constructed Knowers.<sup>126</sup>

These knowing style categories are defined as:

- 1) Silent Knowers (These women experience themselves as mindless and voiceless. Subject to the whims of more powerful people outside of themselves. Assume that only men can really know things. Extreme denial of self and extreme dependence on external authorities.)<sup>127</sup>
- 2) Received Knowers: (These women, who are also dualists, do not believe they can create knowledge on their own.<sup>128</sup> (dualists - only two

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>126</sup> Mary Field Belenky, Blythe McVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Goldberger, and Jill Mattuck Tarule, *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind*, (New York: Basic Books, 1986), 5. (Mathews uses the word “Knowers” while Blenky uses the word “Knowledge”, “Knowers” is used here as well for readability).

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

options exist for anything: good or bad, right or wrong). Distinctively female traits in this category include:

- Moral judgments conform to their particular society, subordinate their own wishes or actions to the voices of others;
- Perceive that developing their own power is always at the expense of others;
- Typically approach adulthood understanding that the selfless care and empowerment of others is central to their life's work and to their personal survival; and
- Self-knowledge comes from others.

3) Subjective Knowers: These women reject external authorities and conceive of knowledge as something personal, private and subjective.<sup>129</sup>

4) Procedural Knowers: These women invest in learning and in applying objective procedures for learning.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

5) Constructed Knowers: These women value both subjective and objective strategies for knowing.<sup>131</sup>

It can be helpful for the preacher to be aware of these five epistemological (knowing) categories. Familiarity with the ways women know can help the preacher in the development of sermons that connect with women in their knowing categories. In every church it can be expected that there are women that may fall within each category of knowers. The preacher should consider developing sermons that connect with women in the various knowing categories. These sermons would have a better chance of connecting and being received by the female audience within each category. Researchers indicate that this study is also germane to women of color to include African American women.

Goldberger points out in *Knowledge, Difference, and Power*, though their study in *Women's Ways of Knowing* included women from demographically diverse backgrounds, including ethnic backgrounds<sup>132</sup> "...women of color argue that the experience and perspectives of members of society who are marginalized by race or class are not well represented in the conceptual framework of much of feminist theory."<sup>133</sup> Their work is

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Nancy Rule Goldberger, *Looking Backward, Looking Forward*, In *Knowledge, Difference, and Power*, ed. Jill Mattuck Tarule, Nancy Rule Goldberger, Blythe McVicker Clinchy, Mary Field Belenky, (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 8.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 8.

considered relevant to African American women, but notes that additional studies are necessary to further explore women by social class and race.<sup>134</sup>

Vanessa M. Bing and Pamela Trotman Reid write, “We believe that such models will extend the work begun by Mary Belenky, Blythe Clinchy, Nancy Goldberger, and Jill Tarule, feminist authors and scholars whose seminal work *Women’s Ways of Knowing* (WWK) provided an examination of experiential processes unique to women.”<sup>135</sup> Bing and Reid acknowledge the sensitivity for race studies between White women and women of color. As it regards African American women Bing and Reid note, “The treatment of women in U.S. society, the expectations of and assumptions about women, all vary greatly, depending on whether one considers the experiences of White women or women of color. Particularly profound are the differences between White and African American women.”<sup>136</sup> “No matter what stigma a White woman had to bear, the Black woman had the double burden of dealing with that stigma as it related specifically to her gender, while concomitantly having to cope with the sanctions of racism.”<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Vanessa M. Reid and Pamela Trotman Bing, *Unknown Women and Unknowing Research: Consequences of Color and Class in Feminist Psychology*, In *Knowledge, Difference, and Power*, ed. Jill Mattuck Tarule, Nancy Rule Goldberger, Blythe McVicker Clinchy, Mary Field Belenky, (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 176.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.,

Aida Hurtado notes that *Women's Ways of Knowing* broke important conceptual ground on how knowledge is produced, comprehended, and ultimately internalized.<sup>138</sup> Hurtado also notes, "Being poor, of Color, and also a woman results in daily experiences that create a systematically different relationship to knowledge (including its production, comprehension, and integration)."<sup>139</sup> Hurtado writes as it relates to the relevance of *Women's Ways of Knowing* to women of Color, "some of these mechanisms overlap with those identified in WWK."<sup>140</sup>

African American women find themselves classified in multiple categories of social identity to include sex, race, ethnicity, and class.<sup>141</sup> This multiple classification affects power and impacts the knower category;<sup>142</sup> "... more importantly of the stigma attached to certain social identities, leads women of Color to an awareness of how they are derogated because of Color and, later, how that derogation is related to gender."<sup>143</sup> Hurtado also writes, "The nuanced social evaluation of multiple group memberships makes many women of Color "relative knowers"—they understand how knowledge is not fixed and is largely socially and politically constructed. For many women of Color not to assume the role of "knower" invites disaster and potential annihilation. "To know" is not the problem; the challenge is "to know what you know" and to be able to circumvent the

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<sup>138</sup> Aida Hurtado, *Strategic Suspensions: Feminists of Color Theorize the Production of Knowledge*: In *Knowledge, Difference, and Power*, ed. Jill Mattuck Tarule, Nancy Rule Goldberger, Blythe McVicker Clinchy, and Mary Field Belenky, (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 372.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 376.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 377.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

consequences of that knowledge while being true to yourself.”<sup>144</sup> Based on the categories of knowing from *Women’s Ways of Knowing* the “relative knowers” are akin to the category five knowers or “constructed knowers”. In this category women value both subjective and objective strategies for knowing. Many African American women would be in category five.

Hurtado acknowledges the five major epistemological categories of knowledge as presented by WWK, and that “...women of Color swim in and out of this epistemological scheme, there is a sixth dimension that may be called subjugated knowledge...”<sup>145</sup> “Subjugated knowledge is knowledge that is temporarily suspended or subjugated to resist structures of oppression and to create interstices of rebellion and potential revolution.”<sup>146</sup> “Women of Color cannot express their knowledge because it is subjugated knowledge—not the central aspect of our language, emotion, or social structures.”<sup>147</sup>

Patricia Hill Collins writes, “Black feminist thought can be viewed as subjugated knowledge. Traditionally, the suppression of Black women’s ideas within White-male-controlled social institutions led African-American women to use music, literature, daily conversations, and everyday behavior as important locations for constructing a Black

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 378.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 386.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 385.

feminist consciousness. More recently, higher education and the news media have emerged as increasingly important sites for Black feminist intellectual activity.”<sup>148</sup>

“Thus lived experience as a criterion for credibility frequently is invoked by U.S. Black women when making knowledge claims.”<sup>149</sup> “Stories, narratives and Bible principles are selected for their applicability to the lived experiences of African-Americans and become symbolic representations of a whole wealth of experience. Bible tales are often told for the wisdom they express about everyday life, so their interpretation involves no need for scientific historical verification.”<sup>150</sup> Collins writes, “In terms of Black Women’s relationships with one another, African-American women may find it easier than others to recognize connectedness as a primary way of knowing, simply because we have more opportunities to do so and must rely upon it more heavily than others.”<sup>151</sup>

These researchers indicate that African American women tend to be relative knowers. Because of gender and racial factors they also tend to be subjugated knowers. The preacher should be sensitive to this because it implies that African American women may not express their mind or knowledge, but will develop acceptable or safe responses. In addition, this research indicates that they will develop other ways to express their knowledge (art, music, poetry, etc.). African American women tend to learn or gain

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<sup>148</sup> Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, (New York: Routledge, 2000), 251-252.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 257.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 258.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 260.



knowledge from relationships with other women in community to include home, family, church, and community. In preaching to women the preacher should be sensitive to the epistemology of women and the nuances affecting the epistemology of African American women in particular.

Because of the different knowing styles the preacher should develop messages that go beyond simply explaining the idea. This refers to the three things that can be done with an idea. In preaching an idea can be explained, an idea can be proven, and an idea can be applied.<sup>152</sup> Mathews points out that the easiest and most common approach the preacher uses in sermons is to explain the idea.<sup>153</sup> Based on the knowing categories of women, some women may not express their rejection of an unexplained or unproved idea, but the idea is nonetheless rejected. Explaining the idea may be effective for women in the first two categories: 1) silent knowers and 2) received knowers. These two groups tend to receive and accept what others tell them. They learn from what others tell them. However, simply explaining the idea tends to be ineffective for the other categories of knowers. Andy Stanley writes in *Communicating For A Change*, “In many Christian circles the assumption is, if the Bible says it, that’s enough. We don’t need a why just a what. And that works for a percentage of Christians. But it doesn’t work for the other half and it doesn’t work at all for people who don’t view the Bible as

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<sup>152</sup> H. W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001), 75.

<sup>153</sup> Mathews, 73-74.

authoritative.”<sup>154</sup> Therefore the preacher must do more than simply explain an idea in the sermon.

For women who are in knowing categories 4 and 5 (4- procedural knowers and 5- constructed knowers) the preacher must also apply the idea and/or prove the idea.<sup>155</sup> Women in these categories will not simply accept an explanation of an idea.<sup>156</sup> In order for the sermon to connect with women in these categories the preacher must also apply and/or prove the idea in the sermon. Women in these knowing categories will better connect with the sermon if the ideas are proven and/or applied.<sup>157</sup> Women in categories 4 and 5 want to know that something is true, not just because the preacher said it, but because the preacher has applied it and/or proven it.<sup>158</sup> Proving an idea in the sermon answers the question, “Is it true?”<sup>159</sup> Applying the idea answers the question, “What difference does it make?”<sup>160</sup>

An understanding of the knowing categories can help the preacher to be more effective in preaching to women. Familiarity with the epistemological categories helps the preacher to anticipate the questions that may arise from the audience. The preacher should provide those answers in the sermon by explanation, application, and verification (proving). The preacher then accommodates the various knowing styles of women. The

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<sup>154</sup> Andy Stanley and Ronald Lane Jones, *Communicating for a Change*, (Sisters: Multnomah, 2006) 187.

<sup>155</sup> Mathews, 89-91.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 86-89.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 74-86.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

preacher can discover the knowing styles within the local congregation by observing the congregation and assessing the knowing styles.<sup>161</sup> The goal is to develop sermons that will better connect with the audience.

Mathews emphasizes the point that it is important for the preacher not to “over” promise what the Bible says.<sup>162</sup> The preacher who overstates what the Bible says or glosses over the issues of a woman’s life runs the risk alienating the female listener.<sup>163</sup> She discovers that what the preacher has said is inconsistent with her life experience and/or that what was prescribed does not work and is simply not true for her. It’s not her faith at issue instead it’s that she has become the victim of overstatement! Women may find themselves functioning in the “Subjective Knower” category (category 3).

As defined earlier women in this category reject all outside authority. She then moves to develop her own theology based upon her experience and what she determines to be true. The result can be devastating as the woman rejects all external authority to include the preacher, the Bible, and God. It is important for the preacher not to promise what the Bible does not promise and not overstate what the Bible says.<sup>164</sup> This may be one of the reasons the church experiences a loss of female membership because for them the preacher has not been truthful. If the female member remains in the same church, that church may face a disgruntled member. The preacher who avoids overstatement and

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 77.

over-promising will better serve the female members of the congregation by preparing sermons that are considerate of the “knowing” categories.<sup>165</sup>

## **WOMEN AND POWER**

In the area of power, Mathews notes that there are three aspects to how men and women view power: 1) women view power as something to share, whereas men view power as something to guard; 2) women tend to fear power; and 3) women tend to fear the abuse of power in the hands of others.<sup>166</sup>

Schaef writes that when it comes to power, “In the White Male System, power is conceived of in a zero-sum fashion. In the Female System, power is seen as limitless. In the male system, “The more one shares power or gives it up to others, the less one has for himself (or herself). There is only so much power available, and one had better scramble for it and hoard it.”<sup>167</sup> “In the Female System, power is viewed in much the same way as love. It is limitless, and when it is shared it regenerates and expands. There is no need to hoard it because it only increases when it is given away.”<sup>168</sup>

Schaef writes, “In the White Male System, relationships are conceived of as being either one-up or one-down. In other words, when two people come together or encounter each other, the White Male System assumption is that one of them must be superior and

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 77-79.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 117-121.

<sup>167</sup> Schaef, 130.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

the other must be inferior. There are no other possibilities for interaction.”<sup>169</sup> In contrast Schaef writes, “In the Female System, relationships are philosophically conceived of as peer until proven otherwise. (This, of course, is only true for women who feel clear and strong and have come to know and trust their own system.) In other words, each new encounter holds the promise of equality. One does not have to be one-up or one-down, superior or inferior; one can be peer.”<sup>170</sup> The preacher should be aware of how women view power in order to develop sermons that better connect with the female audience. The preacher should use power to better connect with the female audience. The preacher should consider using applications and illustrations in sermons that show power in ways that are more meaningful to women.<sup>171</sup> Preachers should be careful how they demonstrate their use of power. Schaef writes that, “Women who buy into the White Male System often use power—when they get it—like men: against other women and to destroy them. Our dislike and distrust of femaleness goes very deep.”<sup>172</sup> The preacher can also help women feel comfortable with the use of power.<sup>173</sup> Mathews writes, “God’s power is given to women as well as to men for the blessing of the world. Women need to know that they too have been empowered by God.”<sup>174</sup> Most women shrink from the use of their God given power and therefore do not utilize their gifting and ultimately may fall short of fulfilling God’s calling on their lives.<sup>175</sup> Schaef writes that, “Some women embrace fairness as a strategy. Women are noted for fairness. We strive to be fair even

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 108-109.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>171</sup> Mathews, 117.

<sup>172</sup> Schaef, 49.

<sup>173</sup> Mathews, 122-123.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

at our own expense.”<sup>176</sup> Power and the use of power is a relevant concern for women. Preachers should be sensitive to how power is presented in the sermon to be consistent with God’s use of power.<sup>177</sup> This will help women see “...God’s use of power in order to understand godly uses of power.”<sup>178</sup>

Some of the views of power may occur outside the pulpit. Life outside the pulpit impacts the perception of the one in the pulpit. The male preacher in particular, should develop sermons that show women effectively using power in meaningful ways. This may help her to become comfortable with power and to feel empowered within the local church—overcoming the fear of power.<sup>179</sup> This would create an environment appealing to women as a place where they are accepted and an important part of the church. This becomes a force to help those women who struggle with power to overcome their resistance and fear of power. The preacher should be mindful of the general feeling women have concerning power and work to encourage women to rise to the power challenge. Barnhouse writes, “...women tend to fear that claiming their true identity might involve a degree of assertiveness that would alienate others.”<sup>180</sup> The preacher should make certain that their management of power is not perceived as an abuse of power.

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<sup>176</sup> Schaef, 35.

<sup>177</sup> Mathews, 124.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 117-118.

<sup>180</sup> Barnhouse, 84.

When it comes to power the African American women may be in a dilemma. Collins writes, “African-American women have been victimized by intersecting oppressions. But portraying U.S. Black women solely as passive, unfortunate recipients of abuse stifles notions that Black women can actively work to change our circumstances and bring about changes in our lives. Similarly, presenting African-American women solely as heroic figures who easily engage in resisting oppression on all fronts minimizes the very real costs of oppression and can foster the perception that Black women need no help because we can “take it.”<sup>181</sup>

The preacher should work to overcome any stereotypical attitudes toward African American women in general and in particular as it relates to power. The preacher should also work to overcome any negative attitudes toward African American women because of gender or race. This awareness and practice should enhance the receptivity of the preacher and the message.

### **AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN’S DESIRES AND ATTITUDES**

To be effective in preaching the preacher should know something of the audience to which he/she is preaching. Knowing the desires and attitudes of African Americans can help the preacher and the message connect with the audience.

George Barna’s research study of African Americans entitled, *African-Americans & Their Faith* found that when given a list of a dozen priorities of what they want out of life

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<sup>181</sup> Collins, 287.

as “very desirable”, ninety-four percent of African Americans said that a close relationship with God would be “very desirable”. When looked at by African American gender, Barna found that ninety-seven percent of African American women deemed a close relationship with God as “very desirable.” In addition, seventy-one percent of African American women deemed active involvement in a church as “very desirable.” The close relationship with God is reflected in the prayer life of African Americans.

The Pulpit & Pew study by Larry Mamiya found, “A profile of religious participation of African Americans indicates that fewer than 10 percent report that they have not attended religious services as an adult except for weddings and funerals.”<sup>182</sup> “Of those who attended churches, 70 percent stated that they attended religious services at least a few times a month, and two thirds reported that they are church members.”<sup>183</sup> When it comes to prayer Mamiya found that, “...80 percent of black Americans report that they pray nearly every day, 27 percent report that they read religious books, and 21 percent watch or listen to religious programming on television or radio daily.”<sup>184</sup> (When considering gender: 84 percent of black women prayed every day compared to 68% percent of black men).<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Larry Mamiya, *Pulpit & Pew: Research on Pastoral Leadership: River of Struggle, River of Freedom: Black Pastoral Leadership and Trends among Black Churches* (Durham: Duke University, 2006) 24.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.



Through effective biblical preaching the preacher has the opportunity to aid the African American female to develop a close relationship with God. Through service and stewardship sermons the preacher has the opportunity to motivate the African American woman to be more involved in the local church. Even though statistics indicate that there is approximately a three to one ratio of women to men in the typical American church, the church has opportunities for women and new members assimilating into the church. And because there are more women than men in the church, the church should not take women's presence for granted. Additionally, as new women come into the church opportunities for involvement should be made available.

The preacher should consider preaching sermons that communicate the value of service and involvement in the local church. The preacher should also consider preaching sermons that show appreciation and praise for those women (and men) who serve in the local church. This should reinforce their service and may encourage others to serve. The church must be sure to have opportunities for women to serve. The church has an opportunity to create an environment in which the African American female can be fulfilled by developing a closer relationship with God and making available opportunities for her to serve.

Other areas of note considered "very desirable" by the African American female included:

- Clear purpose for living: (ninety percent)
- Live close to family, relatives (sixty-eight percent)
- Close personal friendships (sixty-four percent)

Since the African American woman desires a clear purpose for living this presents a significant opportunity to preach messages that surround God's purpose for her life. The preacher may be able to connect to her desires as they intertwine with her desire for a close relationship with God and active involvement in church. Given the various knowing categories and the desires of African American women, the preacher should incorporate explanation, application, and verification in the sermons to have a chance to reach the women.

It may be possible for women to achieve their desires to have close personal friendships in the church. The church helps provide purpose through social outreach. Mamiya found that black congregations generally participate heavily in social services/community programs.<sup>186</sup> Some of the major involvements included: youth programs, financial assistance to families or individuals, voter registration or voter education, food pantry or soup kitchen, counseling services or hot lines, tutoring and literary programs, just to name a few.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 36.

The preacher has an opportunity to help the church meet the African American woman's desires. These relationships will impact the African American woman's moral decisions as per the principles of Kohlberg's and Gilligan's research. It is important for the church environment to be relationally healthy and committed to follow God's Word. This requires sermons that explain what healthy church relationship look like and how they should function. The preacher must be sure to exalt God as the primary relationship for everyone in the church. This may help motivate women to accept God's authority in their moral decision making. The preacher must preach biblically sound sermons so the woman has an understanding of God's expectation of her (her purpose for life). African American women also desire to live close to family and friends. While this is not always possible, however, the church can be the surrogate family of sorts.

African American women's attitudes are important for the preacher to connect through preaching. The Barna study surveyed African American attitudes and values. For the purposes of this project listed below are some of the attitudes and values of African American women from the research.

- There is no such thing as absolute truth:      sixty-nine percent agreed
  
- When it comes to morals and ethics  
each person must decide for himself  
what is right and what is wrong; there  
are no absolute standards that apply  
to everybody in all situations:      seventy-seven percent agreed

- To get by in life these days,  
sometimes you have to bend  
the rules for your own benefit: fifty-one percent agreed
- In times of trouble you are absolutely  
certain that you can count on God to  
take care of you: ninety-four percent agreed<sup>188</sup>

The selected findings from the Barna study can help the preacher better understand the African American female audience. The preacher could use the findings to develop and preach sermons that provide biblical perspective in the area of: absolute truth, morals and ethics.<sup>189</sup> It appears that on matters of truth and morality, relativism reigns. Overall Barna notes, “That the big picture that emerges is that people tend not to worry about truth; they worry more about outcomes, operating on the basis of opportunities and resistance more than truth and principles.”<sup>190</sup> The African American female values and attitudes do not differ significantly from the rest of society.<sup>191</sup>

### **AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN’S INSIGHTS**

Daphne C. Wiggins in her book *Righteous Content: Black Women’s Perspectives of Church and Faith* focuses on the African American female. Wiggins conducted detailed interviews with African American females who were members of a church and

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<sup>188</sup> George Barna, *African-Americans & Their Faith: Research on the Faith, Culture, Values and Lifestyles of Blacks in America*. (The Barna Research Group, 1999), 15.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 15.

considered themselves Christian.<sup>192</sup> Wiggins' observations provide insight on the African American female views of the pastor and preaching in the African American Church (among other topics):

The pastor should be accessible to the congregation and sufficiently involved in the lives of members so that persons do not regard themselves as insignificant to their pastor. The pastor's primary task is to proclaim the gospel with wisdom and power and to provide astute leadership. The ability to do these tasks well can be the distinction between a thriving church and a stagnant or dying one.<sup>193</sup>

Wiggins also notes "...church women (African-American) give witness to the increasing appeal of a more expository style of proclamation."<sup>194</sup> Wiggins' study found that African American women held the centrality of the Word, that more than anything else the women shared that their main reason for coming to church was for the "Word".<sup>195</sup> The women interviewed held a high regard for the preached word. The key factors for good preaching includes: message delivery, content, and contemporary relevance.<sup>196</sup> The quality of preaching was one of the key factors for the women to determine which church to join. Preaching is a key element in the worship experience in the Black church. Nancy Boyd-Franklin writes, "Preaching is a very important part of

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<sup>192</sup> C. D. Wiggins, *Righteous Content: Black Women's Perspectives of Church and Faith*, (New York: University Press, 2005), 38.

<sup>193</sup> Wiggins, *Righteous Content*, 17.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 48-54.

the church service and often arouses strong emotions in the congregation.”<sup>197</sup> Wiggin’s analysis from her study also found:

The women focused largely on the sermon’s content and delivery. They desired clear expositions of the Bible and messages that were particularly relevant to present-day circumstances and challenges. They listened for sermons that were uplifting, addressed daily living, equipped them to handle crises, provided them with skills to share the Christian message, and strengthened their resolve to live the Christian life.<sup>198</sup>

Wiggins describes “whooping” as the climatic moment in traditional black preaching, marked by rhythmic tones, cadences, and testimonial fervor.<sup>199</sup> She found in her study that whooping “was not a requirement for a sermon to be considered palatable.”<sup>200</sup> Wiggin’s observations of the African American females’ perceptions on preaching show them to be astute listeners.

Wiggins’ study shows that African American women want to know the Word. They desire a more expositional style of preaching (this does not indicate a disdain for the former style).<sup>201</sup> There appears to be a transition from the traditional “black preaching” which normally included “whooping” at various points in the sermon and especially at the climatic conclusion of the message. Elliott Cuff defines Black preaching as, “...simply the spiritual, artistic, and linguistic expression used by the preacher to help those persons in the Black church and in the church in general to hear

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<sup>197</sup> Nancy Boyd-Franklin, *Black Families in Therapy: A Multisystems Approach*, (New York: The Guilford Press, 1989), 83.

<sup>198</sup> Wiggins, 49.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>201</sup> Wiggins, 61.

the Word of God.”<sup>202</sup> Cleophus J. LaRue writes in his book, *The Heart Of Black Preaching*, “When the preacher speaks of life out of one of these domains of experience, a bonding takes place between preacher and congregation because the listener senses that the preacher understands some meaningful aspect of his or her life. As the preacher probes the depths of the listeners’ life experiences a ray of hope is injected into the preaching moment.”<sup>203</sup> The effectiveness of preaching is that it touches the realities of people’s lives and provides insight from the Word of God. It not only explains, it also proves and applies the ideas in the sermon. Preaching to the African American female as well requires relevancy to be effective—that it applies to their real life experiences beyond Sunday morning.

The preacher who desires to connect with the African American female audience may be wise to adhere to the observations from Wiggins. African American women want a message with good content with current day relevance topped off with good delivery.<sup>204</sup> This overview of preaching is similar to insights on preaching included in Haddon Robinson’s book on *Biblical Preaching*, where he deals with those and other constructs of sermon development and delivery in extensive detail. Wiggins explains expository preaching as –“...anchoring the sermon in the Bible with practical relevance and application, clearly articulated.”<sup>205</sup> Haddon Robinson’s definition of

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<sup>202</sup> Elliott Cuff, *Black Preaching in the Church, Holy Bible: The African American Jubilee Edition*, (New York: American Bible Society, 1999), 214.

<sup>203</sup> Cleophus J. LaRue, *The Heart of Black Preaching*, (Louisville: Westminster, 2000), 20.

<sup>204</sup> Wiggins, 61.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

expository preaching: “the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through the preacher, applies to the hearers.”<sup>206</sup> The biblical preacher sheds light on the text and exposes his listeners to what the Bible says. The African American female desires preaching that is centered in the Bible and applied to her life. The African American female wants to know the Word of God. The preacher who wants to connect to the female audience should consider preaching expository biblical sermons with good content, relevancy, and delivery. The desire of African American women to know the Word requires preachers to ensure that they themselves know the Word and effectively deliver the Word. African American women want messages that don’t die Sunday night, but live in to their Monday morning worlds. Effective preaching to African American women is a key influencer in their deciding to become members of a particular church. This is an incentive for preachers to hone their homiletical craft.

Wiggins also points out that the preacher’s credibility is impacted by his/her life outside the pulpit in addition to their preaching. The preacher must learn to guard his/her life from scandal and infidelity in particular. Although the African American women were forgiving of preacher transgressions it required them to decide what they

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<sup>206</sup> Robinson, 21.



could receive from the preacher.<sup>207</sup> Effective preaching to the African American female also requires preacher integrity outside the pulpit.

Wiggins writes concerning qualities that African American women thought desirable in a pastor:

“These include integrity, ability to preach and teach, a pleasant personality, accessibility, and approachability. Political involvement in the community was of lesser significance.”<sup>208</sup>

In the Black church the preacher has a significant role to fulfill. In the Black church, “... many Black families a Black church functions essentially as another extended family. The minister is usually a central figure in the life of the family and may be sought out by family members for pastoral counseling in times of trouble, pain, or loss. After the family and the extended family, the church is the most common source of help for Black people.”<sup>209</sup> The church and pastor in the African American church serves a vital role to the community. It appears that the pastor in the black church is in a position of prominence and influence. It is critical for the preacher to develop biblical sermons, deliver the messages well, and guard his/her behavior outside the pulpit.

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<sup>207</sup> Wiggins, 65.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>209</sup> Boyd-Franklin, *Black Families In Therapy*, 82.

As noted earlier, the African American women surveyed in Wiggins' study wanted to receive biblical expository preaching. The preacher has a great opportunity and responsibility to preach biblical sermons in order to speak to the heart of the African American female with God's truth. However, there appears to be preaching in some churches including African American churches that is not anchored to the Bible.

A study by Pulpit & Pew entitled *River of Struggle, River of Freedom: Trends Among Black Churches and Black Pastoral Leadership* notes that there are two major assaults to biblical preaching: the Word-of-Faith movement and the Prosperity Gospel movement.<sup>210</sup> "The "Word Faith" movement, sometimes referred to as Faith movement, was begun by the Rev. Kenneth Hagin, Sr. in 1934 and carried by his son, Rev. Kenneth Hagin, Jr. pastor of the Rhema Bible Church in Tulsa, Okla."<sup>211</sup> According to the Pulpit & Pew study some of the more prominent Word-of-Faith adherents are: "...Bishop T.D. Jakes, Bishop Eddie Long, Rev. Creflo Dollar, Rev. Fred Price, the Rev. Dr. LeRoy Thompson and to some extent, Bishop Charles Blake. Televangelist Benny Hinn's healing ministry is part of Word Faith constituency."<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> L. Mamiya, *Pulpit & Pew: Research on Pastoral Leadership: River of Struggle, River of Freedom: Black Pastoral Leadership and Trends among Black Churches*. (Durham: Pulpit & Pew: Research on Pastoral Leadership. 2006) 10.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

Some of the main teachings of the Word Faith movement include: "We can command God by our words and God wants us healthy and wealthy. And if we are not healthy and wealthy, it is because of our lack of faith and knowledge. And that our world is what we speak it to be."<sup>213</sup> "Dr. Leroy Thompson, Sr., who is also a part of the Word-of-Faith ministries in Darrow, La....underscores the old Puritan rationalization that poverty is a sign of God's curse and wealth is a sign of his blessing."<sup>214</sup>

A cursory review of Scripture refutes the Word Faith and Prosperity Gospel as biblically unbalanced preaching. For example, Jesus' life and ministry is contrary to Word Faith and the Prosperity messages. Jesus' earthly ministry ends hanging on a cross—that does not appear to be prosperity. The Bible actually says that anyone hung on a tree is accursed:

Galatians 3:13(NIV) Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."

In addition, Paul's plea for God to remove his thorn in the flesh does not result in healing:

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 (NIV) <sup>7</sup> To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. <sup>8</sup> Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. <sup>9</sup> But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 11.

the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.<sup>10</sup> That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

The Word of Faith and the Prosperity Gospel message is not sound biblical exposition of Scripture. Wiggins points out in her study that African American women are seeking to be taught the Word; it is disturbing that the Word Faith and Prosperity Gospel have an influence in the Black church (and other churches).

One of the possible outcomes could be devastating for the church. The concern is that when women begin to see that their experiences do not match up with the espoused Word Faith or Prosperity Gospel doctrine, some women may feel that they have been lied to and feel that they can no longer trust the preacher or any other authority figure within the church. The concern is heightened for women that this incident thrusts them into the subjective knower's category. The women in the "subjective knower" category are likely to reject all authority (up to and including God) and develop their own theology based upon their experiences and what they perceive to be true.<sup>215</sup>

Instead of preaching bringing women closer to God the false teaching emotionally separates women from God.

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<sup>215</sup> Belenky, 15.

The preacher is wise to adhere to Mathews when it comes to preaching the promises of the Bible without overstatement. Mathews writes, “The gospel of Jesus Christ promises deliverance from spiritual death and hell. The gospel promises eternal life with the eternal God. The gospel promises God’s empowering presence in our lives. But the gospel does not promise that if we live a certain way, certain results are 100 percent guaranteed.”<sup>216</sup> To be an effective biblical preacher the preacher must not promise what the text does not promise or say more than what the text says. The preacher may lose effectiveness and may damage credibility with the audience. The gravest error is not to be faithful to the text. African American women desire to hear biblical preaching and overstatement does not benefit them or the congregation as a whole.

The Bible provides strong warning for those who prop themselves up as teachers and do not teach scripturally sound doctrine:

James 3:1(NIV) Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.

The judgment here is more strict because greater responsibility rests on the teachers. The teachers have great influence and must guard their tongue.<sup>217</sup>

As anyone who sets themselves up to teach/preach, ultimately they will give an account to God. Unfortunately, many lives will be impacted by these false teachings

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<sup>216</sup> Mathews, 77.

<sup>217</sup> Donald W. Burdick, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: James*, Vol. 12, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 186.

saying more than what the text says and saying more than what God has said. Expository preaching will help to overcome preaching error. Helping people become more aware of what the Word of God is actually saying, and hopefully becoming more like the Bereans.

Acts 17:11(NIV) <sup>11</sup> Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. <sup>12</sup> Many of the Jews believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men.

Here Paul states that the Bereans searched the Scriptures to see if what he said was true. If women feel comfortable with power, they too can become like the Bereans and question false teaching.

However, some women have not been exposed to biblical preaching. Wiggins points out from her work that some women at first did not find expository preaching appealing. However, as they remained under such preaching, they came to embrace biblical expository preaching. One of the African American females responded to Wiggins' interview regarding expository preaching in this way:

It's always something I can take with me throughout the week. I can reflect on it. I can think of when it ties into everyday living. I've heard a lot of preachers and ... sometimes I don't know what they are talking about. It's nothing I can relate to, nothing that applies to my life, and therefore I find myself looking around the church, leaving church, and just not paying attention.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Wiggins, 49.

The effective preacher connecting with the African American female audience should spend more time developing applications and relevance into the sermon. This may mean more time to develop the sermon but the benefit of connecting with the female audience. The result is a biblically stronger church and a biblically well informed congregation.

The 2006 Pew and Pulpit survey found that the median time the white and black preacher spends preparing the message was 10 hours (including delivery) for both.<sup>219</sup> The median time spent on ministerial duties for white pastors was 49 hours and the median time spent in ministry per week for black preachers was 72 hours.<sup>220</sup> The preachers who are at the 10 hours of preparation time to prepare an expository message should consider putting more time into the preparation and delivery of their expository messages. The survey did not examine the type of messages that were delivered. However, quality preaching does not happen by accident. It takes time to prepare a quality message.<sup>221</sup> “Harry Emerson Fosdick spent one hour in preparation for every minute of delivered sermon. Bill Hybels, pastor of the well-known Willow Creek Community church in Suburban Chicago, does approximately the same, and it shows!”<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Mamiya, 33.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> D. Baumann, *Leadership Handbook Of Preaching And Worship: Preparing A Sermon*, ed. J. D. Berkley (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1992), 81-96.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 81.

To some this may appear to be an inordinate amount of hours spent in sermon preparation. The main point is that the preacher should block out time in his/her schedule for sermon development. MacArthur notes that early in his ministry he would spend about 15 hours in sermon preparation.<sup>223</sup> The effective preacher to women (and men) should make a commitment to spend the time required to develop a quality message for the listener that includes explanation, application, and verification.

Another area concerning effective preaching to the African American female related to historical and environmental factors. Jeanne Teresa E. Snorton writes, "The African-American woman's historical reality makes her experiences socially, politically, psychologically, and spiritually different from those of women of European descent in this culture."<sup>224</sup> Sensitivity toward the African-American female's history will enable the preacher to better connect.

The African American female as a body has endured slavery, oppression, racism, discrimination, and considered less than human by some because of the hue of her skin. Yet, the African American female, in general, has risen above the historical shackles.

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<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> J. T. E. Snorton, *The Handbook of Women Care: Through The Eyes of Women, Insights for Pastoral Care*, *The Legacy of the African-American Matriarch: New Perspectives for Pastoral Care*, ed. J. S. Moessner (Minneapolis: Fortress Press), 50.



To be effective in meeting the needs of the African American female audience the preacher should be sensitive to her historical context. Snorton writes, “...I believe an accurate understanding of the African -American woman's experience is essential to the task of responding responsibly to the pastoral care needs of those women.”<sup>225</sup> Pastoral care also takes place as the minister preaches the sermon. The preacher should look for opportunities within the sermon to address the needs of the African American female listener with sensitivity toward her history, past and current. Ramsey writes that Henry Emerson Fosdick’s sermons were such that listeners felt he addressed them personally right where life was most difficult—“personal counseling on a group scale.”<sup>226</sup> The preacher to the African American female should speak to her issues which once again, provides relevancy to her current life situations.

The preacher should not paint with too broad a brush with assumptions about the African American female audience. It would be irresponsible to assume a monolithic history in any audience, including the African American female audience. But in general there will be historical similarities. It may be advisable for the preacher to do an audience assessment. The local preaching pastor undertakes the assessment to better understand the audience and major divisions therein. The better the preacher knows the audience the better the preacher can address the issues of the audience, including familiarity with ethnic history of the audience members.

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<sup>225</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>226</sup> G. Lee Ramsey, J. *Care-full Preaching: From Sermon To Caring Community*, ( St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000), 15.

In his book, *Preaching With Relevance*, Keith Willhite writes that an audience analysis for "...a particular audience would include analyzing the audience through records, questionnaires, surveys, visitation of all kinds, personal observations, informal conversations, past experience, pre-sermon discussions, post-sermon discussions, and so on."<sup>227</sup> The audience analysis will aid the preacher in knowing the audience better. This approach may give the preacher appreciation for the history and background of the audience members, including the African American female. The end result for the preacher is a sermon that is sensitive to the concerns and issues of the listeners.

Snorton writes that in meeting the needs of the African American female through pastoral care she finds that it helps women to make "...a step closer to their deep spiritual need to be heard, to be valued, to be cared for beyond an admiration of their skill at holding it together in the face of the worst odds."<sup>228</sup> The effective preacher to the African American female should keep in mind these needs: to be heard, to be valued, and to be cared for. Sermons that can address these needs biblically should help women feel connected to a God that cares about their situations.

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<sup>227</sup> K. Willhite, *Preaching With Relevance: Without Dumbing Down*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications 2001), 25.

<sup>228</sup> Jeanne Teresa E. Snorton, *The Legacy of the African-American Matriach: New Perspectives for Pastoral Care*, In *The Handbook of Womencare: Through the Eyes of Women, Insights for Pastoral Care*, ed. Jeanne Stevenson Moessner, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 51.

This African American female is not an emotional cripple by any means. Lane in his book, *The African American Christian Woman: The Village Gate Keeper* writes: “It is widely recognized today that the African American woman is among the most educated women in this country. This high percentage of educated Black women is reflective of the legacy of hope and courage inherent in the history of Black women in this county.”<sup>229</sup> MacHaffie writes, “For centuries they (Black women) operated as the glue that held the black community together, reflecting their African heritage of economic and religious importance. In the face of profound oppression, they cared about preserving and continuing prayer, education, family life, and the programs of the churches.”<sup>230</sup>

The African American female deserves a solidly biblical message that is relevant and meaningful to her life which encourages her to be all that God wants her to be. The male preacher in particular, should count it a privilege to honor God with preaching that connects to the audience and in particular, African American female audience.

### **AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN’S ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS**

To effectively preach to the African American female the preacher should be sensitive to the environmental factors impacting the African American female. While there are some similarities, the African American female compared to her European counterpart, has a much different history.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> Lane, 15.

<sup>230</sup> Barbara J. MacHaffie, *Her Story: Women in Christian Tradition*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 282.

<sup>231</sup> Snorton, 50.

The African American female's history in America includes the harsh reality of slavery. Most African American women are descendants of slaves. African American women have had to endure the hardship of racism and sexism. There are things that the African American women have to endure that her Anglo sister will never experience. For example, Rosemary Radford Ruether writes in her book, *Gender, Ethnicity & Religion*, that if someone is socialized "white" there are several psychological and social inferences that they would not experience, while an African American woman is more likely to feel.<sup>232</sup> Noted below are some of the items she lists:

- I can be sure that curriculum materials in high school and college testify to the existence of my race;
- When I date someone from a different racial group, I can be sure that this person is not perceived as declining in social status because of my race;
- I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group;
- I can perform well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race;

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<sup>232</sup> Jacqueline Battalora, *Gender, Ethnicity, and Religion*, ed. Rosemary Radford Ruether. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 7.

- When flagging down a cab and an available cab fails to stop, I can be fairly certain that I was not denied service because of my race;
- I can apply for a bank loan and be sure that my skin color will not work against the appearance of being a good credit risk;
- I know that my presence in a neighborhood does not reduce the value of property in that neighborhood because of my race;
- If I am pulled over in my car by a police officer, I can be pretty sure that I have not been singled out because of my race;
- If I am denied rental housing, I can be pretty sure that I was not denied because of my skin color; and
- I can select “nude” – colored pantyhose or “flesh” – colored Band-Aids and have them fairly closely match my skin color.<sup>233</sup>

These are just a few of the situations most African American women contend with every day. These factors stem from racism and a climate biased against African Americans and African American women in particular. These issues are not considered

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<sup>233</sup> Ibid., 8.

crutches or seen to create a victim mentality, but rather simply to note the environment in which African American women are subject.

The preacher, to be effective in preaching to African American women should consider these environmental factors. The African American female lives in a world where she is judged by the color of her skin and gender stereotypes. The effective preacher to African American women should develop sermons that encourage her in her womanhood and to let her know that she is fully accepted by God. She needs to know that just as Eve she too was created in the image of God and is God's image bearer to the world. This should provide her hope and encouragement to overcome the negative environmental psychological and social factors.

Along the same lines the African American female may be encouraged in her Christian walk as she sees women of color in the Bible used positively in sermons. This is similar to Mathews' comments about the positive impact of women hearing sermons that allow them to see women of the Bible portrayed in sermons: "...preaching from the lives of the people presented in the Scriptures can connect a biblical vision of God to women's lives today. In particular, women are stimulated when they hear preaching based on the lives of great women in the Bible."<sup>234</sup> Similarly, when Blacks see themselves as active participants in the Bible it "...authenticates God's continual activity

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<sup>234</sup> Mathews, 109.

in the Black race.”<sup>235</sup> According to McKissic and Evans, as Blacks see themselves in the Bible it has the impact to “... encourage Christians of African descent to see themselves as the continuation of a divine legacy. Our opulent heritage should serve to motivate us to continue dispensing God’s truth by means of the talents He has deposited in our community; not only for the benefit of the Black community in particular but also for the Christian community at large.”<sup>236</sup> Caine Hope Felder in his chapter, *The Presence of Blacks In Biblical Antiquity (Holy Bible: The African American Jubilee Edition)* lists some people of a “darker hue” found in the Bible.<sup>237</sup> Listed below are just a few of the Black women from the Old Testament noted by Felder:

- Hagar, the Egyptian maid of Sarah (Genesis 16; 21:8-21)
- Asenath, daughter of Potiphera (Genesis 41:45,51, 52; 46:20)
- Moses’ Cushite wife (Numbers 12:1; Exodus 2:21-23)
- Solomon’s Egyptian wife (1 Kings 3:1; 11:1)
- The Queen of Sheeba (1 Kings 1:1-13)<sup>238</sup>

Just as women in general are encouraged when they can hear sermons that include women from the Bible and their stories, the African American women should also be

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<sup>235</sup> William Dwight McKissic, Sr. and Antony T. Evans. *Beyond Roots II: If Anybody Ask You Who I Am*. (Wenonah: Renaissance Productions, 1994), 125.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>237</sup> Cain Hope Felder, *The Presence of Blacks in Biblical Antiquity*, Holy Bible: The African American Jubilee Edition (Cev), ( New York: American Bible Society, 1999), 115 -117 .

<sup>238</sup> Ibid., 115-117.

encouraged when they hear sermons that include Black women from the Bible and their related stories (Black women seen as women of color from antiquity, non African American). Felder writes, “People of immediate African descent can see themselves once again in the Bible as an occasion for celebration, renewed spiritual motivation, and empowerment.”<sup>239</sup> Applied to the African American female in particular, the recognition of the Black female presence in the Bible should help to bring celebration, spiritual motivation, and empowerment. As noted earlier, Mathews observes that some women may fear power and shrink away from power.<sup>240</sup> Similarly, the preacher may have to encourage some African American women to be comfortable with power and not to fear power. Her power has been appropriated by God—and is available for her to use accordingly—she too is one of God’s image bearers.

### **ECONOMIC FACTORS**

African American women also face employment issues. According to the bureau of Labor Statistics in 2000, unemployment rates were twice as high for black women as for white women and white men.<sup>241</sup> Only unemployment rates for black men were higher than black women.<sup>242</sup> The preacher desiring to be effective in connecting with the African American female should be aware of her economic circumstances. Women have made great strides in the employment sector, however the African American women like

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>240</sup> Mathews, 117.

<sup>241</sup> Rebecca Florence Osaigbovo, *Chosen Vessels: Women of Color-Keys to Change*, (Downers Grove: InterVaristy Press, 2002), 52.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 52.



the African American male is subject to higher unemployment compared to the general population.

## **HEALTH FACTORS**

The African American female also faces health issues that are different from her white counterpart. Barna's research indicated that among African American women that ninety-five percent rated good health as very desirable.<sup>243</sup> According to the Center for Disease Control the number one health threat nationally to women is heart disease.<sup>244</sup> However, the health threats are different when viewed by racial and age classifications. For example, according to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), "in 2002 (the most recent year for which data are available), HIV infection was the leading cause of death for African American women aged 25–34 years."<sup>245</sup> This relevant issue to African American women should prompt the preacher to share this threat to their health—while not neglecting the seriousness of other threats to their health to include heart disease, cancer, high blood pressure, stroke, diabetes, etc.

African-American health issues are related to good stewardship of the body that God has given women. The preacher must also deliver sermons that address the contraction

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<sup>243</sup> Barna, 11.

<sup>244</sup> Center For Disease Control, available from <http://www.cdc.gov/women/lcod.htm>; Internet; accessed on 08/14/2006).

<sup>245</sup> Center For Disease Control, [www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/women/resources/factsheets/women.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/women/resources/factsheets/women.htm), Internet; accessed on 08/14/2006.

and spread of HIV/AIDS, and responsible behavior to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, to include abstinence. The preacher should sensitively encourage women and men to guard their sexual conduct in order to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. The preacher should not be afraid to preach on such topics because it is a relevant and critical issue to the livelihood of the congregation. Preaching on such topics as women's health should communicate a sense of care and concern for the African American female audience. The preacher should also be concerned with women's emotional health issues as well as physical health. Mathews notes that "...many women (Christian women included) live with debilitating issues of low self-esteem and depression, both potentially compounded by stereotypes and both influencing how they deal with stress. Christian women bring those issues to church with them each week."<sup>246</sup> The preacher should use biblical examples, illustrations, stories, and metaphors of women as well as men who are psychologically whole.<sup>247</sup> The sermons should include a clear vision of godly, healthy men and women who love God with all their souls.<sup>248</sup>

The preacher should take the time to understand some of the major concerns within the African American family. Nancy Boyd-Franklin writes in her book *Black Families In Therapy*, that one of the greatest concerns within the African American family is racial self esteem and positive racial identification: "one of the greatest concerns of Black parents raising children in America today is the process of encouraging the development

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<sup>246</sup> Mathews, 60.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid., 63.

of self-esteem and positive racial identification. This is not an easy task, since children are often exposed to negative images or caricatures of Black people on television and in other types of media."<sup>249</sup> Effective preaching to the African American female should include ministry to the African American child as well. The preacher should be aware of the racial self esteem and positive racial identification needs that can be reinforced through sermons. One opportunity the preacher has to reinforce positive self esteem is to include positive role models (biblical and non-biblical historical and local figures) as illustrations within the sermon.

The preacher has a daunting task to speak effectively to the African American female audience. She is deserving of the best biblical sermons the preacher can deliver. Biblical sermons will bless the African American female to develop a deeper walk with God and strive to be obedient to His Word. Effective preaching will help her see that she is one of God's image bearers. The African American female copes with racism, stereotype, social pressures, economic, and personal self esteem. Biblical sermons can aid her to face the issues and obstacles and issues she faces every day. Instead of giving up, she keeps persevering and progressing. She fulfills many roles: mother, sister, daughter, grandmother, single, single-parent, employee, and sometimes boss. But biblical preaching can point her toward her most precious relationship—She is a child of God! Biblical preaching can help her be all that God has called her to be! The preacher should be honored that God has allowed him the opportunity to preach before any audience, and

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<sup>249</sup>Nancy Boyd-Franklin, *Black Families in Therapy: A Multisystems Approach*. (New York: The Guilford Press, 1989), 30.

he should truly cherish the opportunity to preach before the African American female audience.

**CHAPTER IV**  
**PROJECT DESIGN**

The project design to assess effective preaching to African American women at Antioch Baptist Church utilized two written surveys. The surveys were used to gather feedback from the audience. The surveys (see Appendix A & B) were distributed and returned on the same days they were administered. The survey documents were distributed as persons entered the worship sanctuary on two occasions. The respondents completed the surveys after each worship service in the sanctuary location. The respondents completed the surveys in approximately 15 minutes. The respondents turned in the completed surveys to a sanctuary attendant (usher) as they exited the sanctuary. The ushers stacked and boxed all the returned surveys for the researcher.

The surveys included a brief statement explaining the purpose of the survey and thanking the respondents for taking time to provide their feedback:

This survey is part of my requirement for the Doctor of Ministry program that I am enrolled in at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. I have developed this questionnaire to gain feedback on my preaching. By taking this survey and giving me your thoughtful and honest response you will aid me immensely. My goal is to serve God and His people to the best of my abilities and gifts. Your feedback will help me toward that goal in the preaching ministry.

All the results are confidential and anonymous! Do not put your name on the survey form. Your responses do not impact my grade. Thank you in advance for taking about 10-12 minutes to complete this survey. Please hand the completed survey to one of the ushers.

Early in the worship service the Pastor also commented on the survey process and thanked the survey respondents for taking the time to give their open and honest feedback. The Pastor shared that their feedback would aid him in being a more effective communicator of God's Word.

The respondents completed the surveys after listening to the sermons preached by the Pastor of Antioch Baptist Church, Fairfax Station, Virginia during regular worship services on two occasions. The results of the surveys are reviewed in chapter 5. The feedback data from the surveys were reviewed and analyzed by gender. The respondents included men and women. The women surveyed were all African American. The feedback data were used to make observations and gain insight about preaching to the African American female audience at Antioch Baptist Church. In addition, the results were used to make observations and recommendations for preaching effectiveness to the African American female in general.

Each survey was comprised of 26 questions: questions 1-8 were multiple-choice; questions 9-22 were related to the sermon's quality; and questions 23-26 were narrative. The only differences between the two surveys were with questions (1, 2, & 3). The differences specifically related to the text from which the sermons were derived, the big idea or theme of the sermon, and purpose of the particular sermon.

### **Questions 1-8: Multiple Choice Feedback**

1. The theme of today's sermon was:
  - a. God readily hears our prayers because of our relationship with Him.
  - b. God only hears people who are persistent in prayer.
  - c. Not certain
  
2. The purpose of today's sermon was:
  - a. Show that God is good (nature/character) can only answer with good.
  - b. Show that we have to be careful of what we ask God because we might get it.
  - c. Not certain
  
3. Today's message originated from which book of the Bible? \*
  - a. John 11
  - b. Luke 11
  - c. Not Certain(\* answers reflected Bible passage for each sermon)
  
4. Did God speak to you through today's message?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
5. Was today's message relevant to your life in current or past circumstances?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
6. Did the message hold your interest?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
7. Did the introduction engage you to want to hear more?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
8. Did the conclusion of today's message remind you of the purpose of the message?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

**Questions 9-22: Qualitative Feedback (Related to the Sermon's Quality)**

For items 9 – 21 please choose from the following for your answer:

(1) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Undecided (4) Agree (5) Strongly Agree

- 9. \_\_\_\_ The message was boring.
- 10. \_\_\_\_ The message kept my interest.
- 11. \_\_\_\_ I found application in my life from the message.
- 12. \_\_\_\_ I felt I understood the purpose of the message.
- 13. \_\_\_\_ The preacher spoke too softly.
- 14. \_\_\_\_ The sermon was developed from a Biblical text.
- 15. \_\_\_\_ I could see myself in today's message.
- 16. \_\_\_\_ The preacher spoke too fast.
- 17. \_\_\_\_ The preacher was too loud.
- 18. \_\_\_\_ The preacher seemed prepared to preach.
- 19. \_\_\_\_ The illustrations helped me to understand the message.
- 20. \_\_\_\_ I remember enough of the message to share it with someone else.
- 21. \_\_\_\_ I felt the preacher was speaking with me.
- 22. \_\_\_\_ I remember the major idea from today's message.

**Questions 23-26: Narrative Feedback**

- 23. Did the preacher do anything that was distracting while delivering today's message?  
If yes, what?
- 24. What did the preacher do that engaged you into today's message?
- 25. What do you feel were the preacher's strengths in delivering today's message?



26. Where do you feel the preacher could have improved in delivering today's message?

The survey documents were designed for respondents to provide certain background information to include gender, marital status, age (range), educational background, membership status (member or guest), and spiritual status (Christian or non-Christian). Other than the general background information, the survey respondents were anonymous.

The survey responses were from the preachment from Survey I: Acts 9:1-22 (God's Transforming Power) and Survey II: Luke 11:5-13 (Why You Can Be Confident When You Pray!). For Survey I, there were 143 surveys distributed and 104 surveys returned. For Survey II, there were 250 surveys distributed and 170 surveys returned. The percent of surveys returned was 72% and 70%, respectively. Survey I included 66 female responses and 38 male responses. Survey II included 117 female responses and 53 male responses. In total for Survey I and II there were 183 female responses and 91 male responses for a total of 274 responses for both surveys. There were 67% female responses and 33% male responses.

The unsolicited feedback from survey respondents about the survey process was very positive. Several respondents shared that they had never heard of any preacher asking for objective feedback from a congregation. Several respondents shared that they were honored to participate in the survey process. The narrative feedback was particularly helpful in making observations about preaching to the African American female audience at Antioch Baptist Church.

**Sermon 1**  
**Title: “God’s Transforming Power”**  
**Acts 9:1-22**

Have you ever met someone you did not like? Maybe someone that you tend to avoid at all cost. If you see them on the sidewalk in the hall way you might turn around and go a different way to avoid them. I would like to share with you someone who I think had we met him during his lifetime we may not have liked him. I came across a person who at one time in their life was a slave trader. I don’t think we would’ve liked that person very much. This person was a slave trader in the commerce of trading human capital, if you will, capturing, buying and selling then transporting from the coast of Africa to the shores of the Americas. In that middle passage many historians tell us millions of Africans died and their lifeless bodies were cast into the sea. I don’t think we would have liked that person very much. Just because of their behavior, because of activity, because of their commerce.

In today’s text we’ll find a person that the early church didn’t like very much. In Acts 9:1-4, we’ll find a person there that the early church didn’t like very much. When you find it say “great is thy mercy.” Amen.

Acts 9:1-14. I’m reading from the New International Version:

“Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus on his

journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed all around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” “Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked. “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied.” “Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.” The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything. In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, “Ananias!” “Yes, Lord,” he answered. The Lord told him, “Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight.” “Lord,” Ananias answered, “I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem. And he has come here with authority from the chief priest to arrest all who call on your name.” May God add a blessing to the reading and hearing of this Word.

The early church did not like Saul. Saul was persecuting the church. Verse 1 says “meanwhile” which tells us we need to look back to figure out what was going in the meanwhile, in the meantime. Chapter 8 of Acts in verse 1 says Saul was there giving approval to his death. Steven had been martyred. As we continue Chapter 8: “On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house he dragged out men and women and put them in prison.” He was breathing out

murderous threats. His whole objective was to destroy the church. He was like a bounty hunter, hunting for the heads of men and women who were of the Way, who believed in Christ Jesus. Now it's interesting, however, that as Saul was out being blood thirsty for believers to take them to Jerusalem and throw them into prison, meanwhile as the disciples were scattered out of Jerusalem, everywhere they went they kept on sharing the Gospel.

Turn with me back to Acts Chapter 1 before Jesus ascends into heaven. Look at Verse 8. "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Now Jesus doesn't tell them how this would happen – that they could leisurely go.

It's like God uses the opposition against the church for His benefit. As this great persecution breaks out in Jerusalem against those who are believers in Christ Jesus, they are dispersed – it's like a diaspora of sorts. And the Gospel is spread. God uses the opposition to carry out His will. And sometimes in our lives we might see great opposition against us. But guess what? God doesn't need things to be perfect to accomplish His will and His way in our lives. No matter what our circumstances in life might be – to be faithful. Know that God is working out the situations in our lives. No matter how bad they might seem at the moment, God is still working it out. Sometimes we might think God is not working, we might think -- where is God? Beyond our purview, beyond our scope, beyond our sight, God is not only working, God is working it out. Then we can rest assured as in Romans 8 that "in all things God works for the good

of those who love him and are called according to His purpose.” We’ve got to hold fast to God’s promises, especially in the crisis times of our lives.

Here the church is being oppressed, the church is being threatened. When the enemy comes against the church, God is working it out to His favor. Saul meant it for evil, those who persecuted the church meant it for evil, but God was working it out for good. Maybe someone in your life is wreaking havoc all over your life, realize God is working it out for your good. Remain firm, don’t join in with them.

Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out threats against God’s disciples (back to Chapter 9). But it’s like God’s got their back. God is working it out for their good. “He went to the high priest asking for letters in Damascus so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.” He’s a bounty hunter chasing the people down like fugitives. But look what God does. God hears the cries of His people. God has a history of hearing the cries of His people. God is not unaware of your circumstances. “As he nears Damascus on his journey suddenly a light from heaven flashed all around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” “Who are you Lord?” Saul asked. “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting,” he replied. Now get up and go into the city and you will be told what to do.”

Isn’t it interesting that Saul who sets out to capture people of the Way (believers of Christ) finds himself captured. Isn’t it interesting that while Saul was trying to arrest

believers of Jesus – now finds himself arrested. He’s out to apprehend those of the Way and yet on his way, God apprehends him. It’s like God has to bring Saul into a dark place so he can see the light. Sometimes God has to bring us into a dark place, a lonely place so we can see His light. God sometimes just has to knock us down so he can raise us up. Sometimes God has to knock us off our high and mighty horses so that He can raise us up. I’ve been there, I’ve got a T-shirt. In my corporate life, I was a high flyer, a high riser. I knew where I was heading. But one day up I-95 God gave me a detour on the Damascus Road and he got my attention. See, God wants to get your attention. God will do what it takes to get your attention. God can bring out the megaphones. And God whispers to us through His Word if we would but to listen. God wants to get your attention. What are you doing in His kingdom? What are you doing for Him? God has a way of knocking us down to shake us, to shape us, to raise us up. The Bible says, “humble yourself before the Lord and he will exalt us in due season.” So many times we want to exalt ourselves in our own season. But God says, “no.” I need to bring you down, I need to shake your world a little, and so I can shape you and use you for my glory.

God takes Saul, who is out persecuting the church, and knocks him down to his knees to get his attention. God might be trying to get our attention. Now look at this, when Saul says, “Who are you Lord?” Jesus identifies himself. But notice how Jesus identifies himself. Verse 4&5 says, “Saul, Saul why do you persecute me? I am Jesus who you are persecuting.” Saul was out to apprehend, to throw in prison, to capture those who were of the Way.

If you turn with me to Acts 22, verse 3 we can get even a little more insight on Saul. Paul reflects back, “I am a Jew born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. Under Gamaliel I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers and was just as zealous for God as any of you are today. I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death. He was serious. Arresting both men and women (he’s equal opportunity) and throwing them into prison. I even obtained letters from them to their brothers in Damascus and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished.” So he had his target set, his scope was set, to apprehend those who believed in Christ Jesus. But look how Jesus answers him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? I am Jesus who you are persecuting.”

Let me break it down for you a little further. When someone lays a hand on a believer; when someone opposes; when someone abuses a believer in Christ Jesus – Jesus takes it personally. He’s like my wife Robyn, you can say a whole lot things about her husband and that kind of stuff but it’s not a problem. But you mess with her children – you don’t want to mess with her children!

Jesus takes it personally when someone messes with his people. So no matter who opposes the work you do for the Lord, who is treating you unfairly, you stand firmly. It doesn’t matter if it’s a boss on the job, you stand firm because Jesus has got your back and he takes it personally. That ought to give you comfort. When you’re going through what you’re going through – stand firm. Stand firm when you’re going through what you’re going through. Here’s some spiritual spinach, though. Sometimes, the reason

you're going through what you're going through is for the salvation of the one who is putting you through. Sometimes the reason you're going through is for the salvation of the person who is putting you through. So be careful how you respond when you're going through. You might be the only Christ-like-ness your oppressor ever sees. That's spiritual spinach. Think about Christ Jesus, He was going through what He was going through, not for His salvation but for those who were putting Him through. That's spiritual spinach. Remain faithful and press through. It's nothing wrong with saying, "Lord, am I in the right place?" I don't know about you, I don't like being persecuted, I don't like being put in tight spots. That's spiritual spinach. That's why you have to pray in the midst of your storms of life. Because many times the reason you are going through is for the salvation of the one who is putting you through, and you may be the only Christ some one may ever see. They are measuring us as we go through what we are going through. That's the biggest sermon some people will ever read.

So we have Saul who's been knocked to the ground, Jesus gets his attention, and he is blinded. He can't see. You've read his resume, you've read the brief report on Saul. He was throwing folk in jail. He was there nodding approval when they were stoning Stephen. Acts 22:6 says "I was hunting these folk down to the death." Now on that Damascus Road God knocks him down so he can raise him up. Look with me at Verse 10. "In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias and the Lord called to him in a vision. "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord." So far, so good. When God calls we ought to say, "Yes Lord." Here I am, send me Lord. The Lord told him, "go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul. For he is praying. In a vision



he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight.

Verse 13: “Lord,” Ananias answered, “I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints (your saints, Lord) in Jerusalem and he has come here with authority from the chief priest to arrest all who call on your name.”

Ananias is basically saying, “Lord do you realize his reputation?” “Lord, do you realize how mean and nasty this Saul is?” “Lord Jesus do you realize it could be my life if I go in his presence?” “Lord do you realize he has authority from the chief priest to do what he wants to do to your church? Jesus, do you realize he’s trying to destroy your church and you want me to do what?” I can understand Ananias. He was probably gripped with fear. He had read the press clippings. He knew Saul would take you out because you are of the Way -- opposition. He was gripped with fear.

How many times in our lives do we know, that we know, that we know that God wants us to do something? Maybe God wants us to apologize to our wives or husbands because we’ve upset them and we say, “no we can’t do that because it may make me even more embarrassed”. How many times do we know God would have us go to a co-worker to set things right and fear grips our soul? We have too much pride, we don’t want to be embarrassed. “Jesus are you crazy do you want me to do what?” Fear will grip you, fear will debilitate you. How many times has God asked you to share your faith on an airplane ride or when you’re slugging into the city? How many times has God asked you to talk about him, not baseball, not basketball, not politics, not the war. How many times does fear grip us? Fear can grip all of us.

But we've got to overcome our fear with faith. Faith always outscores fear. Faith slam dunks fear. Faith overwhelms fear. But we have to have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the kind of faith that is always victorious in Christ Jesus.

Look what Jesus tells Ananias – basically he says, I need to get your attention. I'm giving an order. You're in my army – I'm giving a direct command. Look at Verse 15: "But the Lord said to Ananias, go." He's not debating, he giving a command. Jesus is our commander in chief in the Lord's army. He says, "go!" Let me tell you who this Saul is: this man is my chosen instrument. This man with all that bad reputation! That fire-breathing man whose persecuting and putting people to death. This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel.

Wow Lord, you mean you can use someone who has a past that is nasty and mean and despicable. Whom we don't like? Whom we want to run from, Lord? You can use someone like that? Who is down in the muck and mire and we don't want to be in his presence? You tell me Lord, you can use a man like that, a woman like that, a boy like that, a girl like that? God says "yes." He is my chosen servant. So my friends we can't write off anyone. God can change the most wicked into the most righteous. All God's children have a past. All God's children got a history. He didn't write you off. So how can we say, they're not worthy. They're not worthy to be in my presence. They're not worthy. But yet, God says "Yes he's my chosen servant." And God has a way of transforming the most wicked person into the most righteous person.

If some of your friends in your “before Christ days” could see you now, they’d wonder “how did you get over?” How did you make the transformation? I knew you back when. That’s the power of God who can transform our lives. God can take the most wicked person and make them the most righteous. We can’t write anybody off. What happens is we see the “right now.” God sees the now and the later. Like those diet commercials you see, I’m the before picture, I’m still working on the after picture. God sees us before and after; after we’ve received his son; after we’ve been transformed; after we’ve grown; after we’ve received the Lord Jesus as our Savior. But we want to write folk off right where they are NOW.

Maybe some of you have some family members who are hell raisers. See, God can take the hell raiser and turn him into a heaven “praiser”. God has that transforming power that he can take the most wicked and make him the most righteous. We can’t play God and write people off.

Some people when you walk into the kitchen on the countertop they might see salt, sugar, flour, some milk, some eggs, some butter and a big bowl. That’s all they see. But when a master cook, like momma, comes into the kitchen, she puts it all in the bowl and begins to stir it up. She has imagination and begins to stir it up. Some people just see the now, but she can make it something. That’s what God does. He puts us into his bowl and begins to mold us and shake us and bake us. God sees the now and the later. God has the power of transformation. That’s why we have to go to those God tells us to go. Go to those we don’t like. God is the one who transforms. He uses you as his tool to

share the Gospel wherever you go. Even the person who doesn't look like you, doesn't smell like you, doesn't talk like you God wants you to be there. He wants you to go. God has a way of transforming. That's His power. He can take the most wicked and make them the most righteous.

That slave trader that I was telling you about, in 1748, was in a storm carrying Africans who had been taken into captivity. In the midst of his storm he says, "Lord have mercy on me." A few years later he denounces the slave trade business and goes to become a minister in England. Had we met him back then and had not seen the transformation we might have written him off. But now, in the church we sing his hymns. One of his most well known hymns (this ex-slave trader who became a slave for the Gospel), we sing goes like this:

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, That saved a wretch like me.  
I once was lost, but now I'm found, was blind but now I see.

Tw'as grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fear relieved

How precious did that grace appear, The hour I first believed.

Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come.

'Tis grace that brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.

When we've been there, 10,000 years bright shining as the sun

We've no less days to sing God's praise, than when we've first begun.

God bless you!

**Sermon 2**  
**Title: “Why You Can Be Confident When You Pray”**  
**Luke 11:5-13**

How many of you have heard the phrase, “Be careful what you ask for, you just might get it!” That’s a sad testimony, a sad commentary when someone says “be careful what you ask for, you just might get.” What happens if you are aspiring to go up the corporate ladder? It is your desire and you finally get there, you realize it’s a whole lot of hours, it’s a whole lot of travel and a whole lot of weekends in the office. You might be thinking, “be careful what you ask for, you just might get.” A friend of mine always wanted a Mercedes Benz and finally he got a Mercedes Benz, but he said no one ever told him it might cost him \$3,000 for a tune-up. You would say, “be careful what you ask for, you just might get it.” Some people desiring to be married and think they found the right person and get married, and down the road a little piece, they say “be careful what you ask for, you just might get it.” Some people are looking to have a house full of children which is a good thing, but then you realize it’s from diapers to tuition. They might be thinking “be careful what you ask for, you just might get it.” And some people take that same philosophy and apply it to God, “be careful what you ask God for, you just might get.” That really sets God up, that is really a slanderous accusation against God. It sets God up as if God is trying to trick us. It sets God up that God might be trying to set us up for a fall. It sets God up more like a “I got you” kind of God.

I stopped by this morning to say that’s the wrong understanding of who God is. We can go with confidence to God, we can pray in confidence that whatever we ask, we don’t

have to worry about God setting you up or being a “I got you” kind of God. Today we want to understand we can pray with confidence for whatever we ask God for.

And this morning I invite you to turn to Luke Chapter 11, looking at verses 5-13. As I read that, look at things that indicate you can have confidence in what we ask God for. When you find it say AMEN.

**Verse 5** begins: “Then he said to them, suppose one of you has a friend and he goes to him at midnight and says, “Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him. Then the one inside answers, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can’t get up and give you anything.’ I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man’s boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs. **Verse 9**: So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. **Verse 11**: “Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” May God add a blessing to the reading, hearing and observation of His Word.

Again, we can go to God with confidence of whatever we ask God. Jesus in **Verses 5-13** speaks in a parable. In a parable, Jesus takes common, everyday circumstances, to

illustrate a heavenly principle. Here he takes an everyday understanding that someone can understand very easily to explain the mystery of prayer in the kingdom of God.

**Verse 5:** “Then he said to them, suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, Friend lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him. **Verse 7:** Then the one inside answers, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can’t get up and give you anything.’ Jesus paints a picture. Here’s the parable. A friend comes to the house and he doesn’t have any provisions. Maybe the commissary was closed, maybe he didn’t have time to do shopping that week, maybe it’s the week before payday. Whatever, his cupboards are bare. Then he leaves his home and goes to a friend’s home at midnight and begins to ask, begins to knock, hey I need some help. I have a friend coming to visit me and I don’t have any provisions and I need some help. I need some help.

I remember a neighbor came to us around 9:00 p.m. and said they were out of eggs and baking a cake and wanted to know if they could borrow three eggs. We said “yes.” If it had been at midnight, we may not have answered the door. But here this friend has a knock at midnight. You know, midnight, that’s when you make sure all the locks are locked. All the doors are shut tight. All the dogs and cats and the children, everything is locked-up. All the bolts are locked and the alarm systems are on. You’re in your nice, comfortable bed.

Yet, here comes a friend at midnight knocking on your door. I need some help. I have a friend coming and I don't have any provisions. In the ancient eastern culture it was a shame if you had a friend to visit you, you weren't very hospitable, if you didn't provide them something. It's almost like having a scandal in the neighborhood. So he goes to his friend at midnight. He's begging, he's about to knock the door down. Read further in **Verse 8** "I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs." This man goes to his friend's house based on friendship says, "I need some help, I've got an issue, I've got a need. "**Verse 8** tells us the reason he gets his needs met is not because of his friendship. This friendship at midnight was over. When the sun goes down, the friendship was gone. It wasn't convenient. But the text says the reason why his friend gets up and answers his need it's not about friendship. That's critical.

Hopefully you have some friends who no matter what time you call them, they would respond. In this particular parable Jesus says, this person doesn't respond because of friendship, he responds because of the man's boldness. Jesus begins to paint a contrast here. It can be interpreted many different ways. One is his shamelessness. Because he is causing a disturbance in the neighborhood, he's bringing shame. He's a nuisance. He's aggressively going after it. I need this! I need this! He's taking advantage of a friendship. Because of his friendship, he doesn't get it. It's like if I went to Rev. Jones, and said I need a couple loaves of bread, because of friendship, he might give it to me. If I went to Rev. Coppedge, because of friendship he might give it to me. But here he doesn't get it out of friendship, he gets it out of boldness-- his incessant asking that he



gives him something just to shut him up. “Here, come get what you want and get out of here.”

It reminds me of a time when I was going to second grade. My mom was busy (I’m number 5) and she was busy with the other 4. I had a couple dollars. I had my t-shirt on, no shoes and no socks. Mom, can I go to the Silco, can I go to the Silco? Silco is like a Dollar Store. I need a notebook for school. I begged her. After about an hour she said, “Do what you want to do.” So I walked to the Silco in my t-shirt with no socks and no shoes. On my way back home she met me and put me in the car. Then she said what I dreaded to hear, “wait till your daddy gets home.” I had nagged her so much she really didn’t mean it, but she said “go, get what you want.”

Jesus shows a contrast, the friend gets his need met not because of friendship but because of his nagging. **Verse 9:** So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. This friend had to literally beg for what he needed aggressively. Jesus says because of who you are, you just need to ask, to seek and to knock. When we go to God we just need to ask and to seek and to knock. It doesn’t say you have to take a spiritual crowbar to open heaven’s resources up. We don’t have to break into heaven. We don’t have to beg God. He hears our faintest cry. He hears our whispers. As a matter of fact, it’s not about if I keep asking God, if I keep asking God, he’s saying that’s the wrong attitude in prayer. That’s not confidence in prayer. He’s saying just ask and it will be given to you. Just

seek and find. Just knock and open. You don't need spiritual dynamite to open up heaven. You might wonder why?

Our 8 year old daughter is not inhibited to ask anything of her mom and dad, and expect to receive it. That's how we should be with God. Look at **Verse 2**: when you pray say, Father. In the Aramaic it's, "Abba", translated daddy. That's why we can just simply ask, we can seek, we can knock. Why? Because He's Daddy. Because He's Father God, because of our relationship. See the man in the story had to beg his friend and he got what he wanted because of his insistence. But with us because of our relationship with daddy God, because of our relationship with the heavenly father we simply ask. We can pray in confidence because of our relationship with God. That's relationship. Those of you who have children know they have no inhibitions in asking mom and dad anything. We can go with confidence to God and ask because we have a relationship with Jesus Christ. We can ask because God is approachable. He allows us to approach Him. We can knock because He's available to us, He's our Daddy God. We can simply go and ask whatever we will. That's awesome!

Jesus paints a contrast. Jesus says you just come and ask. That's awesome. We can be confident God will hear our prayer. Why? Because of relationship -- He is our friend. O What a Friend we have in Jesus. That's awesome that we can go to a heavenly father and he opens heavens door for us -- because of relationship. It's like in our home we have 3 children and all of them have free access to the refrigerator. There's no lock on it for them. If the plumber comes in, he can't go to the refrigerator. Because there's

no relationship. If the electrician comes in, he can't go to the refrigerator. Because there's no relationship. But our children have free access.

In heaven we have access to the riches and blessings of heaven. Why? Because of our relationship with our Father. We are His sons and daughters. That's why we can simply ask and seek and knock. Because of relationship with "Our Father who art in heaven." Remember there's a relationship. That's awesome. We can pray with confidence that God hears our prayers. Why? Because of relationship. When we travel sometimes we get back in the night time. One of the kids will inevitably ask for the key to the house. They will go even in the dark and put the key in the keyhole and open it up. Same with us, God has given us the keys to the riches in heaven. We can pray with confidence that God hears our prayers. Our Holy God hears our prayers. It's not about cajoling and rolling in the dust. Simply ask God.

There's nothing wrong with persistence in prayer, but Luke 11 is talking about something else. We can find persistence in Luke 18:1 as Jesus shows his disciples a parable to show that they should always pray and never give up. But in Luke 11 understand that the principle of prayer is that God hears your prayer because of relationship. It's not a 50-50 gamble, not like at a crap table. No, it's because of relationship. We can freely go to God.

I see some inquisitive looks on your faces. Some of you are thinking I've gone to God in prayer and it doesn't seem to work out too well. What's up with that? Let's look

at **Verse 11-13**: “Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” Our heavenly Father only gives us that what is good. Jesus is talking to an audience prior to Pentecost. Prior to this time, there was not the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Today, you and I are indwelled permanently with the Holy Spirit as believers in Jesus Christ. We are sealed until the day of redemption. The Holy Spirit is a good gift from God.

Look with me at **Matthew 7:11**: If you then though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children how much more will your father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!” God can only give us good gifts. God will only give us what is good. Think about the doxology. Think about James 1:17 “all good gifts come from God.” God can only give us what is good. God cannot violate His nature. All the things He gives us are always good. We can go in confidence knowing he only gives us that which is good in answer to our prayers. He cannot change his nature. I still see some inquisitive looks. Let’s break it down some more. Turn with me Philippians, Chapter 1, verses 20-21. Here the Apostle Paul writes: “I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

So even God’s “no’s” are good. Even when it comes to death. While I’m in this body, I have opportunity to serve God. But when I die it is gain because I’m in the

immediate presence of God. When I am there if God didn't heal my body, I'm in glory land. Glory hallelujah! Oh happy day! Even God's "no's" are good. We have to get beyond our natural understanding. Help me to understand and receive your "no's." We have to get out of our perspective. His "no's" even because of his character are good. To live is Christ, to die is gain. When we die we'll be with Him. Praise God! Isn't that what this journey is about? Even God's "no's" are good.

For example last night about 10:00 I'm reading over my sermon, and our 8 year old daughter sits down with this big bowl of ice cream. She had had a McFlurry earlier in the day, and she had a soda earlier in the day. I'm thinking, "wait a minute, girlfriend you're about to turn in and you want to eat this big bowl of ice cream." That was too much. Daddy says, "no." Not because you're being punished, but because I love you. She tears up but I'm daddy and I still say "no."

God is like that. God hears us and all of His answers are good. It's about following His will. God, I'm trusting you even when I don't understand. All of his answers are good. We may not understand them at the moment. So who has to change? It's us.

Like 15-16 years ago I was down in Williamsburg and I was up for this big promotion as Head Controller. I knew the job was mine. I could taste the promotion. I knew what kind of changes I was going to make. I told Robyn we were going to move into that gated community. This was a job I could retire from and I prayed and I prayed and I prayed. My boss called me in and said, "Marshal you didn't get the job." Wait a minute,

I prayed for this job. Wait a minute God, this was the job I was going to retire from! I was in my bathrobe for a week. Looking back, I see that had I gotten that job we would not have moved to Northern Virginia. Then I would not have gotten that Vice President job and I wouldn't have surrendered to God, and I wouldn't be here this morning to preach His Word for a season.

We have to come in line with God's will. We can pray with confidence that knowing that however God answers our prayer is good. If we have a job request, we ought to pray to God. If you have a health issue, keep on praying. If you have a marriage issue, keep on praying. If you have a school issue, pray and keep on praying. You got a boss issue, keep on praying, knowing that God hears our prayers. Know that his answer is always good because of His character and His nature!

God bless you.

**CHAPTER V**  
**OUTCOMES & CONCLUSIONS**

The preaching surveys provided feedback from the male and female audience members of Antioch Baptist Church. The feedback was sorted by gender. The female feedback was used to evaluate preaching effectiveness to the female audience members. The feedback data was used to assess preaching effectiveness in sermon development, sermon delivery, and listener satisfaction. There were some communication insights gained from the study which were used to develop recommendations and strategies for preachers to consider for effective in preaching to the female audience. A journal article was written pertaining to the subject of effective preaching to the African American female audience. Additionally, a power point presentation was developed and presented at two workshops to African American pastors at a conference in July 2006.

**FEEDBACK EVALUATION**

Questions 1-3 were designed to determine if the preacher was effective in communicating the theme and purpose of the message in addition to the Book of the Bible from which the message originated. This required the preacher to communicate the theme and purpose in the message in a memorable way. The results of the survey questions 1-3 are noted below:

1. The theme (Big Idea) of today's sermon:

Survey 1: 65 of 66 (98%) female respondents chose the correct theme.

Survey 2: 108 of 117(92%) female respondents chose the correct theme.

Total: 173 of 183 (94%) female respondents chose the correct themes.

2. The purpose of today's sermon:

Survey 1: 65 of 66 (98%) female respondents chose the correct purpose.

Survey 2: 83 of 117(71%) female respondents chose the correct purpose.

Total: 148 of 183(81%) female respondents chose the correct purposes.

3. Today's message originated from which Book of the Bible:

Survey 1: 65 of 66 (98%) female respondents chose the correct Book.

Survey 2: 112 of 117(96%) female respondents chose the correct Book.

Total: 177 of 183(97%) female respondents chose the correct Book.

A majority of the female audience remembered the theme and purpose of the sermon. In addition a majority also remembered the Book of the Bible from which the sermon originated. The preaching appears to be effective in this area. The preacher used restatement of the theme and purpose throughout the sermon. The preacher also reiterated the Bible text during the introduction, and referred to the Bible verses on several occasions during the sermon. These were some of the methods the preacher used to reinforce the theme, purpose and text.

Survey 2 question 2 (purpose of the sermon) was correctly chosen by 71% of the respondents. Further review found that 29% did not choose the correct purpose. This may have occurred because the introduction included a comment that was memorable, but the preacher meant to convey it as a negative and many took it as the intended



purpose. The preacher has to be very clear in aural communication and should be cautious about using negative illustrations that could be taken as positive.

Questions 4-8 were intended to evaluate the preacher's effectiveness with style, delivery, introduction, and conclusions. In addition, the listeners' assessment related to their feeling whether or not God was speaking to them, relevance, and message satisfaction.

Questions 4-8 were a series of "Yes/No" responses:

4. Did God speak to you through today's message:

Survey 1: 60 of 66 (91%) female respondents answered "Yes".

Survey 2: 105 of 117 (90%) female respondents answered "Yes".

Total: 165 of 183 (90%) female respondents answered "Yes".

5. Was today's message relevant to your life in current or past circumstances:

Survey 1: 62 of 66 (94%) female respondents answered "Yes".

Survey 2: 114 of 117 (97%) female respondents answered "Yes".

Total: 176 of 183 (96%) female respondents answered "Yes".

6. Did the message hold your interest:

Survey 1: 61 of 66 (92%) female respondents answered "Yes".

Survey 2: 106 of 117 (91%) female respondents answered "Yes".

Total: 167 of 183 (91%) female respondents answered "Yes".

7. Did the introduction engage you to want to hear more:

Survey 1: 63 of 66 (95%) female respondents answered “Yes”.

Survey 2: 105 of 117 (90%) female respondents answered “Yes”.

Total: 168 of 183 (92%) female respondents answered “Yes”.

8. Did the conclusion of today’s message remind you of the purpose of the message?

Survey 1: 53 of 66 (80%) female respondents answered “Yes”.

Survey 2: 108 of 117 (92%) female respondents answered “Yes”.

Total: 161 of 183 (88%) female respondents answered “Yes”.

The responses to question 4-8 indicate that the preacher was effective in connecting with the female audience. A majority of the respondents (96%) felt that the message was relevant to their lives and 90% felt that God spoke to them through the messages. Ninety-one percent (91%) felt the messages held their interest and 92% felt that the introduction was engaging. When asked if the conclusion reminded them of the purpose of the message 88% answered “Yes”. While this response is acceptable it may indicate that the conclusion could have been more effective in reminding the listeners of the purpose of the sermon, since 12% indicated that the conclusion did not remind them of the purpose. In particular, Survey 1 respondents indicated that 20% felt that the sermon did not remind them of the purpose. The results of Survey 1 may indicate that a clearer connection to the purpose could have made the conclusion more effective, since a

significant percent answered “No”. The preacher also felt that the sermon evaluated for Survey 1 could have had a more effective conclusion.

Questions 9-22 were designed to collect listener feedback on a qualitative scale (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Undecided, Agree, and Strongly Agree). The questions were gathering feedback of listener satisfaction in the area of application, preacher delivery, illustrations, connecting with listener, and remembering the purpose. The average score for each question is presented below:

(1) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Undecided (4) Agree (5) Strongly Agree

9. The message was boring:

Survey 1: 1.55

Survey 2: 1.38

(The female respondents strongly disagreed that the message was boring.)

10. The message kept my interest:

Survey 1: 4.17

Survey 2: 4.25

(The female respondents agree that the message kept their interest.)

11. I found application in my life from the message:

Survey 1: 4.24

Survey 2: 4.38

(The female respondents agree that that they found life application from the message.)

12. I felt I understood the purpose of the message:

Survey 1: 4.42

Survey 2: 4.40

(The female respondents agree that they understood the purpose of the message.

This positively correlates with the questions 1 and 2. )

13. The preacher spoke too softly:

Survey 1: 1.50

Survey 2: 1.51

(The female respondents strongly disagreed that the preacher spoke too softly.)

14. The sermon was developed from a Bible text:

Survey 1: 4.67

Survey 2: 4.35

(The female respondents agreed that the sermon was developed from a Bible text.)

15. I could see myself in today's message:

Survey 1: 4.05

Survey 2: 4.23

(The female respondents agree that they could see themselves in today's message.)

16. The preacher spoke too fast:

Survey 1: 1.61

Survey 2: 1.58

(The female respondents disagreed that the preacher spoke too fast.)

17. The preacher was too loud:

Survey 1: 1.33

Survey 2: 1.38

(The female respondents disagree that the preacher was too loud.)

18. The preacher seemed prepared to preach:

Survey 1: 4.61

Survey 2: 4.63

(The female respondents agreed that the preacher seemed prepared.)

19. The illustrations helped me to understand the message:

Survey 1: 4.26

Survey 2: 4.40

(The female respondents agreed that the illustrations helped to understand the message.)

20. I remember enough of the message to share it with some one else.

Survey 1: 4.48

Survey 2: 4.32

(The female respondents agreed that they remembered enough of the message that they could share it with another person.)

21. I felt the preacher was speaking to me:

Survey 1: 3.80

Survey 2: 4.01

(The female respondents agreed that they felt the preacher was speaking to them.

Survey 1 average was 3.8, 83% of the respondents indicated Agree or Strongly agree; 9% responded undecided, and 8% responded disagree or strongly disagree.)

22. I remember the major idea from today's message:

Survey 1: 4.59

Survey 2: 4.48

(The female respondent agreed that they remembered the major idea of the sermon.)

Questions 23-26 required a written response from the listener. These questions are noted below:

23. Did the preacher do anything that was distracting while delivering today's message:

There were no recurring themes in the respondents' comments from Survey 1 or 2. Most of the respondents wrote "No" or left the answer space blank.

24. What did the preacher do that engaged you into today's message:

The majority of the responses were in three categories: illustrations (45 comments), relevance (37 comments), and delivery (29 comments). These three areas accounted for 78% of the narrative responses. Other responses included introduction (11), references to the text (11), and application (9).

The strengths of the preacher in connecting with the female audience appear to be in the areas of the illustrations, relevance, and delivery. The illustrations helped to explain and prove the principles of the sermon. The relevance of the sermons showed how the topic was germane to the listeners' lives.

25. What do you feel were the preacher's strengths in delivering today's message:

The majority of the responses pertained to delivery, illustrations, and relevance.

The number of responses citing delivery were (74 or 51%); illustrations (43 or 30%); and relevance (22 or 15%). These aspects of the sermons helped the message connect with the audience.

26. Where do you feel the preacher could have improved in delivering today's message:

There were 27 comments on this section that related to the delivery. The general comment was that the preacher could have spoken slower—the pace may have been too fast at times. The other recurring theme had to do with Survey 1 and Sermon 1 the preacher did not give the title of the sermon. Those respondents prefer the title up front. The title helps the listener tie the message together and gives the listener an idea of where the sermon is headed.



## **REFLECTIONS FROM PREACHING SURVEYS**

The preaching surveys of the African American female audience provided much insight to effective preaching to this group. The data suggests that they are very astute listeners. Based upon the survey they connected well with the messages which were evident by their remembering the themes and purposes. They appreciate preaching that is anchored in the Bible and preached in an expository style.

The narrative respondents noted areas of delivery that the preacher should be mindful of to be more effective. That is, being more cognizant of the rate of speech which may have been too fast at times. The astute listener noted that the preacher did not give the title of the sermon in the beginning of the message. This may have helped others connect more to the sermon and grasp the theme more quickly.

The preacher used illustrations and relevant applications to connect with the audience. The preacher's introduction helped to engage the audience. The preacher also used restatement to reinforce the big idea of the message throughout the sermon.

The survey provided objective anonymous feedback to the preacher. As Dr. Haddon Robinson discussed in the doctoral seminar (The Preacher and the Message) that most preachers do not get objective feedback on their preaching. Most preachers get their feedback by standing at the door as people exit. The objective feedback is a tool that can help the preacher to better assess preaching effectiveness. The feedback data helps the preacher to assess the effectiveness with the whole congregation or a particular subset of

the congregation. This project used the survey to assess preaching effectiveness to the African American female audience at Antioch Baptist Church, Fairfax Station, Virginia.

### **SEMINAR PRESENTATION**

As an outgrowth of this thesis, a power point presentation was given in two workshops. The workshops were held to encourage African American pastors to collect objective feedback from their congregations. They were encouraged to gain objective feedback on their preaching effectiveness. These workshops were presented at the LifeWay 2006 Black Church Leadership Conference (Southern Baptist Convention) at Ridgecrest, North Carolina (July 17-21, 2006). The workshop was presented twice during the week. In total approximately 25 African American pastors participated in the workshop

While the pastors understood the benefit of objective feedback, many were reluctant to open themselves to objective feedback. Some shared that they were reluctant to do so because some members of the congregations may use it as an opportunity to criticize (take their shot) at the pastor. I tried to encourage them of the benefits of the objective feedback:

- Shows congregation you are genuinely concerned about preaching well
- Shows congregations that you are open to feedback;
- Shows congregation that you want to be the best that God would have you to be;

- Most of the congregation will be humbled and honored that they were asked to give feedback; and
- Will show African American women you want to be effective in sharing God's Word with them in a more meaningful and substantial way.
- Some people may use the survey as an opportunity to be overly critical or harsh. Receive it as constructive and some feedback that is not a recurring theme may need to be discarded.

## **PROPOSED JOURNAL ARTICLE**

“Effective Preaching To Women”

By Marshal L. Ausberry, Sr.

Whether you preach to the same audience Sunday after Sunday or preach to different audiences, you should be concerned about “who is in the audience?” When you are scheduled to preach the first question you ask should not be “What do I preach?”, but “To whom am I preaching?” That is the critical question that many preachers fail to ask. Knowing the makeup of the audience you will face—should help you to more effectively connect with the audience. Think about this, if I were to preach to a teen group I’ll preach one way, and if I’m going to preach a group of middle-aged adults, I’ll preach differently. It can even be the same text, but I will preach it differently. I will not change the meaning of the text. But because of the audience, I will change my illustrations, my introduction, my conclusion is likely to be different, and my applications will likely be different. Why? To make the message meaningful and relevant to the audience to which I am speaking.

I recently did an assessment to see if I am effective in preaching to the African-American female members of the audience I address on a weekly basis. There are some inherent differences between men and women that the preacher has to be mindful of in order to be most effective.

The most obvious difference is gender. The preacher has to appreciate that the audience he/she address is rarely homogeneous as it pertains to gender. Therefore the preacher should be sensitive to gender differences that may cause difficulty with the message connecting with the female audience.

The preacher should evaluate the illustrations that are used in the sermons. The preferred illustrations should be those that connect with both men and women. So many times the illustrations may only connect with the men in the congregation, shutting out the female audience. This is significant when you consider the average congregation in America is almost 75% female. For example, one time I included a football illustration that was more in depth than it needed to be for the audience. I used the term “fourth and one” as a key part of my illustration. Afterwards a woman came up to me and asked, “What did I mean by fourth and one?” It hit me like a ton of bricks—by using that illustration I completely excluded her from the message. It was like pushing the mute button on her television set. We need to use illustration that can be easily understood by the whole congregation, men and women.

The preacher desiring to be effective in reaching the female population should consider doing a sermon series on women in the Bible. The preacher should use positive reflections on the women of the Bible. The women you preach to will identify with the women of the Bible and see themselves as part of God’s program. If you are a married male preacher be careful not to make your wife look like an idiot in your sermons and do

not make your wife the butt of your jokes. This sends a message of what you think of women in general and your wife in particular. Let your wife be the hero in your stories!

The preacher desiring to effectively reach women should also be mindful that in particular African American women desire an expository message anchored in the Bible. Women want messages that speak God's Word to them. Women want to know what God is saying to them from His Word. Don't simply gloss over an idea in your sermon, women are astute listeners and need you to prove what you say from the text. They also need you to apply God's Word to their world. Women are seeking messages that are relevant to their day to day lives.

You might wonder why it is important to consider women as you preach. Today's women may be single parents, wives, single, married, mothers, and presidents of the companies. For the preacher's message to connect the preacher must be an effective communicator of God's Word to women. This means the preacher must take the time to preach messages that are relevant to their world. This will help to create an enjoyable sermonic experience where she will feel like the sermon had her life and world in view.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS & INSIGHTS**

The following are recommendations for effective preaching to the African American female:

- Meet and talk with the women in the congregation to build a rapport to better understand the women in your congregation;
- Get to know some of the history of the women in the congregation to understand their experiences, struggles, and hardships;
- Review the sermons you have preached in the past and see how many times you have used women from the Bible as the main character in your sermon; periodically preach sermons using positive women characters from the Bible;
- Consider celebrating women in your congregation by including them in your sermons noting their service and role they play in the church;
- Consider preaching sermons that address women's health concerns possibly tied in with a women's health fair. Consider preaching sermons on topics to include: single parenting, marriage, living single, depression, stress, suicide prevention, parenting, etc.;
- Consider the various knowing categories of how women know what they know and adjust preaching as to effectively reach women in the various categories;
- In preaching, resist the temptation to say more than what God has promised in His Scriptures, resist the urge to overstate what God has said;
- Guard your life outside the pulpit, because you may damage your credibility with the female listeners in particular;

- Guard your use of power so that you do not cause women to fear you or feel intimidated by you;
- Consider preaching sermons that show how God uses His power and authority contrasted with His great love toward us;
- Preach sermons that instruct women that they are also the recipients of God given power and authority, and how to use such power; and
- Consider periodically obtaining feedback from the congregation or sub groups (i.e. African American Women), consider using a survey to a large or small group.



## Power Point Presentation: Feedback On Your Preaching

Slide 1

So, You Really Want To Know  
If Your Sermon is Hitting the  
Bulls-eye!©

Marshal L. Ausberry, Sr.  
July 2006

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Slide 2

Introduction

- Pastor
- Antioch Baptist Church
- Fairfax Station, VA
- [www.antioch-church.org](http://www.antioch-church.org)
- [mausberry@antioch-church.org](mailto:mausberry@antioch-church.org)
- DMIN candidate in Preaching
- Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

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Slide 3

Are you really getting the bull's eye?



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Slide 4



### To Preach:

**κηρύσσω** [*kerusso* /kay-**roos**-so/] **v.**  
translates as “preach”, “publish”,  
“proclaim”, “preached”.

- to be a herald, to officiate as a herald.
- to proclaim after the manner of a herald.
- used of the public proclamation of the gospel and matters pertaining to it, made by John the Baptist, by Jesus, by the apostles and other Christian teachers.

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Slide 5



### Preaching:

Preaching is like spiritual “heart” surgery.  
Effective preaching changes lives.

Some of us might be using old, rusty, and  
dull scalpels...

Are your sermons hitting the mark?

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Slide 6



### How God uses preaching:

- **2 Timothy 4:2** **Preach** the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.
- **1 Timothy 5:17** The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is **preaching** and teaching.
- **1 Timothy 4:13** Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to **preaching** and to teaching.
- **2 Corinthians 4:5** For we do not **preach** ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.

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Slide 7

How God uses preaching:

Think about this, one person has said,  
"that when God wanted to save the world  
He sent a preacher!"

**Matthew 4:17(NIV)** From that time on  
Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the  
kingdom of heaven is near."

7

Slide 8

How do most preachers get feedback on  
their sermons?

In many churches, the preacher stands at  
the exit door, and gets "feedback" from the  
persons in the pew...

"Good sermon, good sermon, good  
sermon...etc. etc. etc."


8

Slide 9



(used with permission)

Slide 10



Observation:

Is that really “objective” feedback or just Christians being nice in order to escape... until next Sunday?

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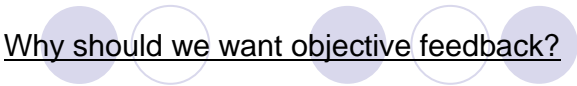
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Slide 11



Why should we want objective feedback?

- Are you effective at what God has called you to do?
- Is your sermon really accomplishing what you meant it to? If you had a purpose for your sermon?
- Are they developing an appreciation for the Bible?
- Are you wasting the congregations' time?
- Helps congregation to grow spiritually and pragmatically.
- God has a high view of “preaching” and we should also!
- Your sermons may have “bad breath” and no one will tell you!
- People stop coming to your church.
- Preaching is the highlight of worship.

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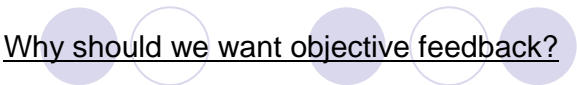
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Slide 12



Why should we want objective feedback?

- Why should people give you 30 (+/-) minutes of their precious time?
- Are you making the Bible relevant to their lives?
- Are you stagnant in your preaching?
- Is your head “stuck in the sand”?

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Slide 14

Here's why I want objective feedback:

*"I want to be the best preacher that God has equipped and enabled me to be/become!"*

*The objective congregational feedback helps me to be/become the best preacher that God would have me to be.*

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Slide 15

Are you willing to pay the price?

One day we want to hear the words, as preachers, "well done my good and faithful servant/preacher"!

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Slide 16

Key Elements to Consider:

Sermon Feedback

Sermon Delivery

Sermon Development

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Slide 17

### Sermon Development

- Discover the preaching passage.
- Discover the biblical author's intent.
- Develop the purpose of the text.
- Develop a timeless-truth (big Idea/thesis).
- Develop "sermon-in-a-sentence"!
- Develop remainder of sermon.
- Develop introductions, illustrations, conclusions, and applications.

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Slide 18



It occurs to Rev. Billings in the middle of point #2 that point #3 misses the point entirely.

Know the "Big Idea"

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(used with permission)

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Slide 19



"And, Father, I ask thee now for a good text to accompany this fantastic joke."

Start with the Text First!

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(used with permission)

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Slide 20

### Sermon Delivery

- When asked what is an effective sermon, **85%** of the congregation will say that **delivery** determines if a sermon is effective or not!
- You've got to be able to deliver the package (just like Big Brown). That's your job.

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Slide 21

### Sermon Delivery

- ERP
- Attire, grooming, etc.
- Clarity of speech
- Eye contact
- Facial expressions
- Confidence
- Restatement
- Land the sermon

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Slide 22

### Sermon Feedback:

Do not rely solely on your momma or your spouse for sermon feedback! "They love you and will be prone to tell you that you are great, because they don't want to hurt your feelings."

You are fragile enough after preaching...

Most preachers resign on **MONDAY!**

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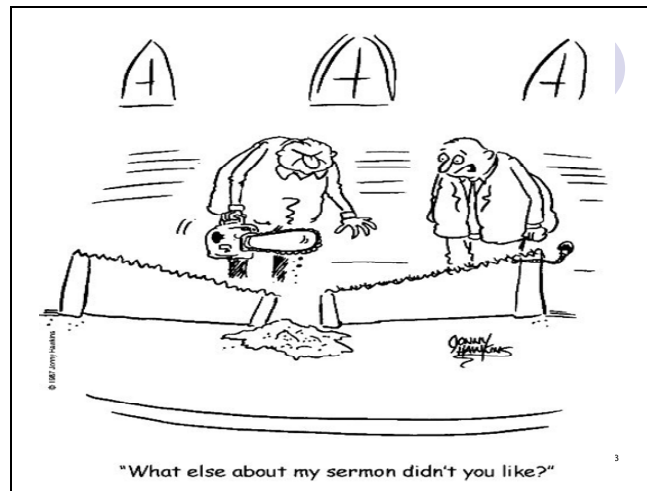
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Slide 23



(used with permission)

Slide 24

Everyone gets feedback:

- President's Clinton & Bush (approval ratings)
- Student (grades)
- Wal-Mart (customer surveys)
- End of this session (survey)
- Professors in college & seminary
- Restaurants (tips, etc.)
- Husband and Wives
- Everyone gets feed back (even the speeder)
- **So, why not preachers on their preaching?**

Slide 25

Sermon Feedback Methods:

- Personal Inquiry (one-on-one, non-clergy)
- Personal Friend (clergy, etc.)
- Preaching Group (preachers)
- Preaching Focus Group (congregation)
- Preaching Survey (congregation)



Slide 26

### Sermon Feedback

- Downside:
  - You give people permission...
- Upside:
  - You give people permission...
- Fears:
  - Cross bearing



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Slide 27

### Personal Inquiry

- Get with a non-clergy friend, and ask him/her what they thought of your preaching.
- Give them permission to be honest.
- Let them know it will help you to become all that God wants you to be.
- Be prepared to hear what you did not expect to hear.



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Slide 28

### Personal Friend (clergy)

- Trust worthy
- Ask PFC to listen to your sermons
- Give permission for open and honest feedback
- Share you concerns about your preaching afterward—receive feedback



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Slide 29

### Preaching Group

- Get with a group of preachers in your area and discuss each others sermons
- Share tapes/cd's before you meet.
- Set ground rules.
- Share future sermon ideas.
- Share your thoughts about your preaching.
- Be prayed up!!!



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Slide 30

### Focus Group

- Random members of local congregation.
- Meet with you to give you feedback on sermons (pre and post).
- Meet with target groups.
- Focus group without you being present post-preaching.



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Slide 31

### Survey

- Develop a congregational survey
- A certain sermon on a certain day
- Objective anonymous feedback
- Explain your purpose
- Process data (for your eyes only!)
- Feedback from those who listen to you Sunday after Sunday.



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Slide 32

### Survey Benefits

- Appreciation
- Amazed
- Astute congregation
- Toss out extremes
- Process objective and narrative
- Gives permission for feedback
- Promotes approachability



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Slide 33

### Survey Benefits

- Implement change in your preaching
- Hit the bull's eye more often
- Sends a big message to the congregation!
- It's like getting feedback from your spouse. Some things your spouse is dying to tell you—if you only create the opportunity!



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Slide 34

### Survey

Consider giving the congregation an opportunity to give you constructive feedback.

They are giving it to one another, why not you, you are the only one who really needs to hear it.



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Slide 35

### Designing a Preaching Survey

- Ask questions concerning sermon:
  - The big idea
  - The purpose
  - The application
  - Relevance
  - Feel as if they heard from God
  - What are they to do



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Slide 36

### Designing a Preaching Survey

- Ask questions concerning sermon:
  - Introduction & Closing
  - Distractions
  - Like/dislike
  - Changes
  - Strengths/weaknesses
  - Sound System, etc.



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Slide 37

### Processing Feedback

- Receive it as a help not a hurt.
- Don't over analyze
- Don't try to figure out "Who"
- Ask God show you how to receive feedback.
- Use it to be all that God wants you to be.



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Slide 38



(used with permission)

Slide 39

## Reflection

- God has called you:
  - Be prayerful
  - Be prepared
  - Be purposeful
  - Be personal

39

Slide 40

## Questions & Comments

God bless you!

40

## **CONCLUSION**

This project has been personally rewarding. The study and research have been personally beneficial. The study has made me more sensitive to the diversity within an audience. As preachers we must contain our stereotypes so that our preaching is not negatively impacted. This may be obvious, but preachers must respect those to whom we preach to male and female, young and old, rich or poor, black or white and every reflection in between. We must honestly leave our prejudices and presuppositions on the shelf as we read and study God's Word in order to develop and preach sermons that are pleasing to God. Men and women are both God's image bearers to the world.

We must continue perfecting the tools God has given us to be His preachers. We must never feel as if we have arrived. We must cherish the privilege to preach!

## **APPENDIX A: SURVEY 1**

### **PREACHING EFFECTIVENESS SURVEY**



#### **DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROJECT FOR PASTOR AUSBERRY**

This survey is part of my requirement for the Doctor of Ministry program that I am enrolled in at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. I have developed this questionnaire to gain feedback on my preaching. By taking this survey and giving me your thoughtful and honest response you will aid me immensely. My goal is to serve God and his people to the best of my abilities and gifts. Your feedback will help me toward that goal in the preaching ministry.

All the results are confidential and anonymous! Do not put your name on the survey form. Your responses do not impact my grade. Thank you in advance for taking about 10-12 minutes to complete this survey. Please hand the completed survey to one of the ushers.

Thank you very much for your assistance,

*Marshal L. Ausberry, Sr.*

Antioch Baptist Church

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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***Check all the boxes that apply to you:***

Service: 7:45 ☐ 9:30 ☐ 11:30 ☐

Location: Sanctuary ☐ Gibbs Hall ☐

Male ☐ Female\* ☐ Single ☐ Married ☐

17 or younger ☐ 18 – 25 ☐ 26 - 35 ☐ 36 – 45 ☐ 46 – 55 ☐ 55+ ☐

Member ☐ Guest ☐

Christian ☐ Non-Christian ☐ Not Sure ☐

High School graduate/equivalent ☐ College graduate ☐ Post Graduate ☐

(\*all female respondents were African-American)

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Circle one answer for each questions 1-8:

1. The theme of today's sermon was:
  - a. God can change the heart of a person.
  - b. Some people are too evil for God to save.
  - c. Some people are not worth saving.
  - d. Not certain
2. The purpose of today's sermon was:
  - a. To encourage me to share my faith with those who are worthy.
  - b. To encourage me to share my faith, even to those that are different from me.
  - c. To encourage me to share my faith, even to those that are different from me.
  - d. Not certain
3. Today's message originated from which book of the Bible?
  - a. Acts
  - b. Mark
  - c. Not Certain
4. Did God speak to you through today's message?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
5. Was today's message relevant to your life in current or past circumstances?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
6. Did the message hold your interest?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
7. Did the introduction engage you to want to hear more?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
8. Did the conclusion of today's message remind you of the purpose of the message?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

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For items 9 – 22 please choose from the following for your answer:

(1) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Undecided (4) Agree (5) Strongly Agree

9. \_\_\_\_ The message was boring.



(1-)Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Undecided (4) Agree (5) Strongly Agree

10. \_\_\_\_ The message kept my interest.
11. \_\_\_\_ I found application in my life from the message.
12. \_\_\_\_ I felt I understood the purpose of the message.
13. \_\_\_\_ The preacher spoke too softly.
14. \_\_\_\_ The sermon was developed from a Biblical text.
15. \_\_\_\_ I could see myself in today's message.
16. \_\_\_\_ The preacher spoke too fast.
17. \_\_\_\_ The preacher was too loud.
18. \_\_\_\_ The preacher seemed prepared to preach.
19. \_\_\_\_ The illustrations helped me to understand the message.
20. \_\_\_\_ I remember enough of the message to share it with someone else.
21. \_\_\_\_ I felt the preacher was speaking with me.
22. \_\_\_\_ I remember the major idea from today's message.
23. Did the preacher do anything that was distracting while delivering today's message?  
If yes, what?
24. What did the preacher do that engaged you into today's message?
25. What do you feel were the preacher's strengths in delivering today's message?
26. Where do you feel the preacher could have improved in delivering today's message?

## **APPENDIX B: SURVEY 2**

### **PREACHING EFFECTIVENESS SURVEY**



#### **DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROJECT FOR PASTOR AUSBERRY**

This survey is part of my requirement for the Doctor of Ministry program that I am enrolled in at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. I have developed this questionnaire to gain feedback on my preaching. By taking this survey and giving me your thoughtful and honest response you will aid me immensely. My goal is to serve God and his people to the best of my abilities and gifts. Your feedback will help me toward that goal in the preaching ministry.

All the results are confidential and anonymous! Do not put your name on the survey form. Your responses do not impact my grade. Thank you in advance for taking about 10-12 minutes to complete this survey. Please hand the completed survey to one of the ushers.

Thank you very much for your assistance,

*Marshal L. Ausberry, Sr.*

Antioch Baptist Church

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

---

#### ***Check all the boxes that apply to you:***

Service: 7:45 ☐ 9:30 ☐ 11:30 ☐

Location: Sanctuary ☐ Gibbs Hall ☐

Male ☐ Female\* ☐ Single ☐ Married ☐

17 or younger ☐ 18 – 25 ☐ 26 - 35 ☐ 36 – 45 ☐ 46 – 55 ☐ 55+ ☐

Member ☐ Guest ☐

Christian ☐ Non-Christian ☐ Not Sure ☐

High School graduate/equivalent ☐ College graduate ☐ Post Graduate ☐

(\*all female respondents were African-American)

---

Circle one answer for each questions 1-8:

1. The theme of today's sermon was:
  - a. God readily hears our prayers because of our relationship with Him.
  - b. God only hears people who are persistent in prayer.
  - c. Not certain
  
2. The purpose of today's sermon was:
  - a. Show that God is good (nature/character) can only answer with good.
  - b. Show that we have to be careful of what we ask God because we might get it.
  - c. Not certain
  
3. Today's message originated from which book of the Bible?
  - a. John 11
  - b. Luke 11
  - c. Not Certain
  
4. Did God speak to you through today's message?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
5. Was today's message relevant to your life in current or past circumstances?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
6. Did the message hold your interest?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
7. Did the introduction engage you to want to hear more?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
8. Did the conclusion of today's message remind you of the purpose of the message?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

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For items 9 – 22 please choose from the following for your answer:

(1) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Undecided (4) Agree (5) Strongly Agree

9. \_\_\_\_ The message was boring.
10. \_\_\_\_ The message kept my interest.

(1-)Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Undecided (4) Agree (5) Strongly Agree

11. \_\_\_\_ I found application in my life from the message.
12. \_\_\_\_ I felt I understood the purpose of the message.
13. \_\_\_\_ The preacher spoke too softly.
14. \_\_\_\_ The sermon was developed from a Biblical text.
15. \_\_\_\_ I could see myself in today's message.
16. \_\_\_\_ The preacher spoke too fast.
17. \_\_\_\_ The preacher was too loud.
18. \_\_\_\_ The preacher seemed prepared to preach.
19. \_\_\_\_ The illustrations helped me to understand the message.
20. \_\_\_\_ I remember enough of the message to share it with someone else.
21. \_\_\_\_ I felt the preacher was speaking with me.
22. \_\_\_\_ I remember the major idea from today's message.
  
23. Did the preacher do anything that was distracting while delivering today's message?  
If yes, what?
  
24. What did the preacher do that engaged you into today's message?
  
25. What do you feel were the preacher's strengths in delivering today's message?
  
26. Where do you feel the preacher could have improved in delivering today's message?

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